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ETHICAL TEACHINGS OF KIERKEGAARD AND SARTRE-A COMPARATIVE STUDY

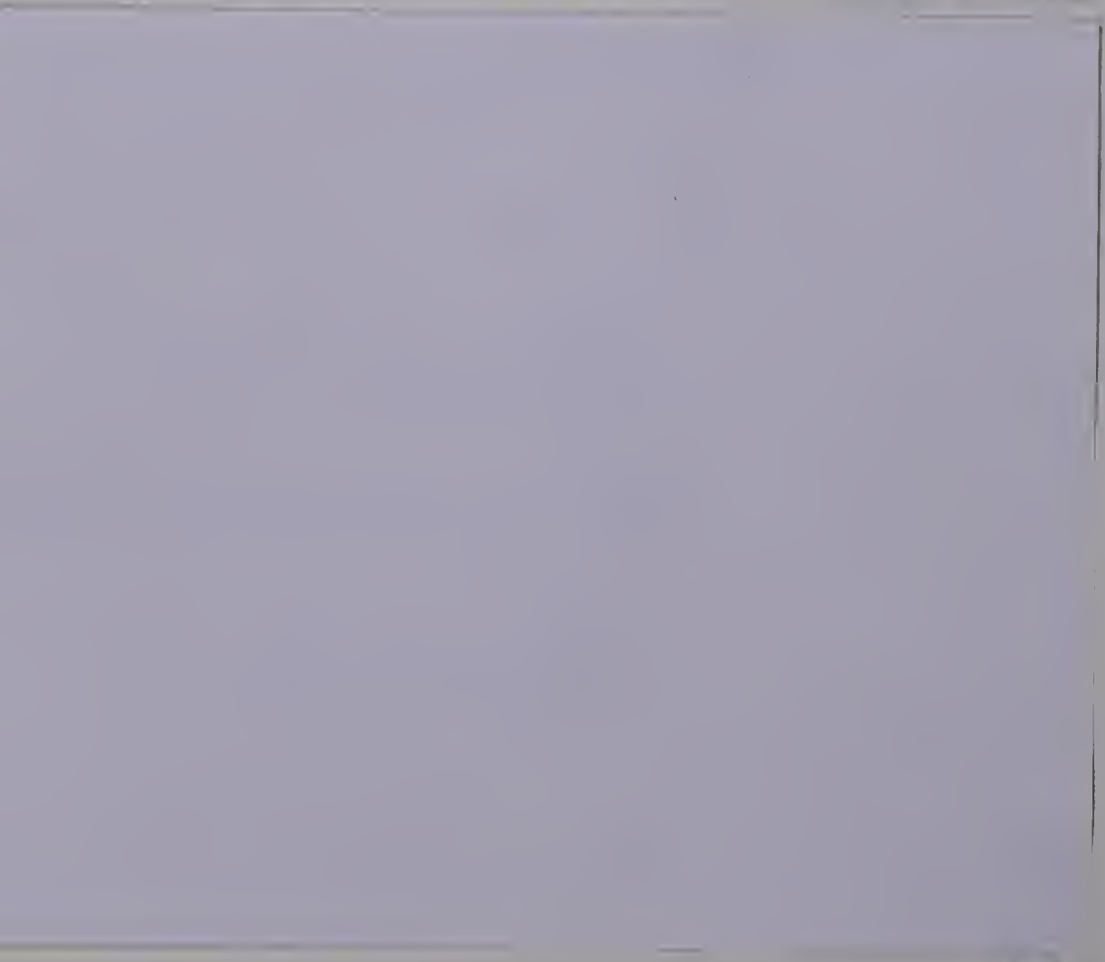
by

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ABSTRACT

Both Kierkegaard and Sartre have 'man' as the principal theme of their philosophy. Though Kierkegaard is known as a theologian, he is more concerned with man's relationship to God, than with God in Himself. The question--how to become a Christian--is for Kierkegaard the form of the other question: how to become an individual. According to him, "A crowd . . . in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction."[1] The salient feature of Kierkegaard's thought is the rediscovery of the individual from the crowd and the effort to place the individual in his proper position.

Sartre, on the other hand, is so overwhelmed with his idea of 'man' that he identifies 'existentialism' with the only authentic form of 'humanism'. Nietzsche's idea of the 'death of God' is presupposed by the philosophy of Sartre. Man steps, in his atheism, into the place of God; the individual becomes a law unto himself. But although man endeavours to overcome his finitude, his endeavour is futile and ultimately doomed to frustration. Man is a useless passion.

The philosophies of Kierkegaard and Sartre differ greatly in many respects. Yet they can both be viewed as growing out of the

[1] S. A. Kierkegaard, The Point of View for My Work as an Author. Trans. by W. Lowrie (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 112.

particular critical situation in which modern man finds himself. It is in the area of their common concern for this situation that Sartre has been influenced by the writings of Kierkegaard.

The thesis is divided into three main parts. The first is an introduction and consists of a brief discussion of the lives of Kierkegaard and Sartre as philosophers. The second part is the summary of the ethical teachings of Kierkegaard and Sartre as expressed through their philosophical and literary works. As their ethical theories pervade their entire philosophy, I have divided this part into nine chapters--each of which deals with a particular theme of their philosophy. And it is within the limitations of these themes that I have compared their respective ethical theories. These chapters are divided and subdivided as is necessary for a comparative analysis of their views.

The concluding part consists of a critical analysis of their views on ethical problems. Here I find more to defend than to criticize Kierkegaard's position.

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction. It is a general tendency among the students and writers of modern existentialism to make a comparison between Kierkegaard--a passionate nineteenth century philosopher-theologian and Sartre--an atheist and the most controversial of twentieth century writers. But this task is, undoubtedly, a very difficult one. In addition to the primary difficulties of comparing two men each with unique characteristics and different historical situations, there is the difficulty of comparing their philosophy which at first glance seems to reveal no common ground. However, a patient and comparative study shows that at least there lies between them the common aim of examining and interpreting man's condition in the world and the possibilities for human freedom. Each in his own life and epoch discerned that human life was on the point of losing all meaning.

There are undeniable differences between Kierkegaard and Sartre. Kierkegaard was a Christian and Sartre is an atheist. For Kierkegaard to be a true philosopher meant to understand oneself as an authentic being before God with all that is involved in reaching this position. For Sartre, on the other hand, God is totally absent from the world and his problem is how to reach authenticity in the face of 'nothingness'.

Existentialism as a distinct philosophical movement first received its impetus through the reflections and formulations of Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelian tendencies. He was strongly opposed to any form of system-building. According to him, the living individual, incomplete and changing, can never be swallowed up by any abstract system.

Kierkegaard is not an ontologist and is not attempting to describe the "general" structures of human existence. Where he deals with the problem of human existence, he insists that this existence, which is irreducibly mine, can never be exhausted by any concept or system of concepts. Sartre, although ostensibly against philosophical systematizing and abstraction, has been accused by many[1] of being a system-builder in the tradition of Hegel. Sartre is a phenomenological ontologist who attempts to supply a systematic framework for the understanding of man and society.

Kierkegaard describes in his writings a series of attitudes to life with a truly Christian orientation. Sartre proceeds in the opposite direction. Through nihilism and atheism he approaches a point of view which expresses the greatest hostility towards Christianity and seeks to base the values of life on an entirely atheistic context.

All these differences may lead one to draw the conclusion that the thoughts of Kierkegaard and Sartre are diametrically opposed to each other. This does not mean, however, that they contradict each other, but simply that they are doing very different things with the same themes. They continually encounter the same problems but interpret them quite differently--the interpretation depending on the basic ideas dominating their thoughts. They differ significantly, to be sure, but their divergent pathways both lead to the elucidation of the fundamental question: 'What does it mean to exist?' Kierkegaard sought an answer to this question which existence poses, and he found it in the faith-relationship through which the solitary individual confronts his God. Sartre accepts neither faith nor God. Yet he holds a similar view on the finite and

[1] Iris Murdoch is one of them.

problematic character of existence.

Kierkegaard attacks the proud traditions of theology, ethics and metaphysics accusing them of attempting to conceal crucial decisions that we must make. Ethics is, for him, not a matter of seeing the good but of making a decision. The self is essentially intangible and must be understood in terms of possibilities, dread, and decisions. These are also the motifs that remain central in Sartre's atheistic philosophy. Here lies Kierkegaard's influence over Sartre, in fact, over all the later existentialist philosophers.

My purpose in this thesis is to offer a brief and comparative description of the ethical teachings of Kierkegaard and Sartre and to make a few critical comments on them. It is brief in the sense of being limited to a very narrow part of their voluminous works. Unfortunately, neither has written any formal ethical treatise. However, Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling and Either/Or express most of his ethical views and Sartre has promised to present us with one. I will here limit myself to an account of their ethical views, a very small part of their whole work. Another point that I must mention is that this is merely a summary. A summary always misses the particular shades of meaning which an author brings out as he develops his theme in his own words. However, throughout the whole thesis, I try to present their points as clearly as is possible in this form.

As an introduction to my task I will here give a very brief life-history of Kierkegaard and Sartre because I feel that their backgrounds play an important role in their respective philosophical and ethical views.

Kierkegaard's life-history. Søren Kierkegaard presents a unity of life and thought which is unique. His philosophy includes elements of psychology, ethics, aesthetics, theology, and logic all mingled together in a highly individualized manner. The final goal to which all his works are directed--the revelation of the true nature of Christianity--is the product of this unity.

Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen on May 5, 1813, the youngest child of a rich elderly merchant. His father was a God-fearing man of strong character with considerable intellectual ability. He was of a melancholy temperament and Kierkegaard was profoundly influenced by his father. From him he acquired his deeply meditative approach to ultimate problems and his predilection for the gloomier aspects of the Christian religion.

Outwardly Kierkegaard's childhood was happy, but inwardly he was even then burdened with melancholy. The subsequent death in quick succession of four members of the family, had convinced his father that the whole family was cursed for his boyhood sin. And it is not surprising that, on discovering this terrible secret, Kierkegaard should have revolted against his father's upbringing, the stifling brand of Christianity. At this time he lived for several years a disorderly life in this revolt against his father and against God.

However, at the age of twenty-five, with his maturer views on human weakness, he was reconciled with his father. This reconciliation was followed by a very striking and effectual experience of moral conversion together with a religious conversion which turned him once more to Christianity. This stage was the first crisis in his life.

Although in accordance with his father's wish, he chose the

faculty of theology, when he entered the University of Copenhagen in 1831, Kierkegaard devoted a considerable amount of his time to literary and philosophic studies. However, after his father's death, largely in belated deference to his father's wish, Kierkegaard engaged himself seriously in the study of theology and passed his examination, though he never became a pastor. Shortly after, in 1840, while still at the University working for the Master of Arts degree, he became engaged to Regine Olsen with whom he was deeply in love.

Immediately after the engagement the second crisis of his life occurred. He began to realize that there were further 'orders' from God and he felt himself forced to break his engagement and to forsake, humanly speaking, the greatest love and happiness of his life. The psychological reasons which led him to this conclusion are not easy to determine. Different writers suggest different reasons. But underlying his decision to break off with her, there is the failure of his idea to reconcile a love for man with love for God. In the life of Kierkegaard, Regine Olsen was the symbol of earthly values that must be completely sacrificed to serve God.

Another point that ought to have been considered in this engagement, but mostly has been overlooked, was the disparity in their respective levels of maturity. Kierkegaard was already far more mature in character and mind than his years. He referred to himself in his Journals as "a child who was already an old man and never grew younger."[1] Regine, on the other hand, was still a very young girl hardly out of her teens and presumably having lived a sheltered life. What would they talk about

[1] The Journals of Kierkegaard, trans. by Alexander Dru (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1938), Entry No. 921, p. 311.

once they were exhausted the weather and tea-party topics? Kierkegaard did not want to burden the girl he loved with his profound melancholy and the tensions of his "mission".

Kierkegaard received his Master's degree in 1841, by an able dissertation on Socrates under the title 'The Concept of Irony'. Few days after this the final breach with Regine occurred. This unhappy engagement had a very considerable effect on Kierkegaard as a writer. At that time he rushed off to Berlin to ease the situation and to collect his shattered emotions. After five months' solitary work, his first important work, Either/Or,(1843), was published. In this book he draws a contrast between the aesthetic and the ethical life. Within a short period appeared Fear and Trembling and The Concept of Dread, all three under pseudonyms.

If one examines Kierkegaard's works, one finds two major divisions. The first half, most of which was published pseudonymously, provides, from the ethical point of view, a theory--the theory of stages or levels of life. The Concluding Unscientific Postscript mediates the division. The second half comprises works published from 1846 through 1851 and develops with great detail the ethical as well as the pragmatic significance of the Christian religion. Most of these works are written in his own name. There is obviously a wide range of autobiographical material in his works. The stages in his life had a wider significance for a reflective thinker like him, than that of merely personal events. He universalized these stages as distinguishable phases and possibilities of human existence. His works trace the inner conflict that he suffered as he struggled through aestheticism and moralism to God.

From a self-knowledge of his true nature Kierkegaard wants to lead

man to an understanding of Christianity, that is, to the consciousness of both the meaning and the implications of a spiritual and everlasting existence. He devoted most of the time of his later life to this task. In his opinion, from this consciousness derives man's ethical task, his moral imperative. He could not finish his mission as he died of ill health in November, 1855, at an early age of forty-two.

Kierkegaard was one of the most elusive writers of his age. For his unsparing criticism of the society in which he lived, he was belabored and ridiculed by his contemporaries. With amazing foresight he predicted the total spiritual bankruptcy towards which Europe was heading. Long before the actual happening, he anticipated such phenomena as the degradation of human personality, collectivism, and mass-mindedness. Unappreciated in his day, he has become a belated force in our time.

Sartre's life-history. A century after Kierkegaard's death, there come in the history of modern philosophy a group of philosophers who although they deny the presence of God and reject all gospels, place their emphasis on existence. The chief impetus of this group came from the works of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Sartre was born in Paris on June 21, 1905. Having lost his father when he was only two, it was in his maternal grandfather's house where he grew up. None of his family members were religious minded enough, like Kierkegaard's father, to establish a God-fearing attitude in the boy. In fact, as he mentions in his autobiography,[1] it was mainly due to the indifferent attitude of his grandparents toward

[1] Jean-Paul Sartre, The Words, trans. B. Frechtman. (New York: George Brazilles, 1964).

religion that he gradually came to deny the existence of God.

His grandfather, Charles Schweitzer, was a professor of German. Even in his childhood, Sartre was drawn to the study of literature and philosophy. Educated at the École Normale, he received his degree at the age of twenty-five and taught philosophy at Le Havre, Laon and Paris. Sartre went to study modern German philosophy at the Institut Français in Berlin. It was here that he came under the influence of the German philosophers--Husserl and Heidegger. In his early thirties he spent his spare time in travelling chiefly in Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece and England until the eve of the World War II when he was drafted into the army. At the time of the German occupation, Sartre remained in Paris risking his life by becoming one of the most active members in the Underground Resistance Movement.

It was at this time that Sartre began to formulate his own philosophy of paradox, a philosophy which maintains that external oppression is actually a liberating force. It frees the inner man to make his own daily decisions. The experience of the German occupation was of great significance in the maturing of Sartre's thought. It gave, he thinks, a romantic and heroic dignity to a vision of life which had previously been at best social. The resistance spirit of Sartre aimed not so much at freeing France but at the general liberation of man.

After the liberation of France, Sartre, the teacher and fighter, became an even more militant writer. He began to use his experiences to illustrate and explicate the great themes which would dominate all his future writings. In his book What is Literature?, Sartre compares the situation of the writers of his generation and those of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. There he writes: "These writers, who did

not fight in the first war and who did not see the second one coming, who did not want to believe in the exploitation of man by man, . . . did not have a sense of the tragic in one of the most tragic of all eras."[1]

"On the contrary, from within oppression itself we depicted to the oppressed collectivity of which we were part its anger and its hopes. With more luck, more skill, more talent, more cohesion, and more drive, we might have been able to write the interior monologue of occupied France."[2]

Sartre exposed clearly the motives of man floundering in an hostile world, a universe in which, according to him, 'nothing', absolutely nothing, justifies his existence. In this universe where men are constantly involved in a struggle with the environment which is both hostile and purposeless, nothing but man's free-will allows him to survive.

As an existentialist, Sartre naturally turned to other forms of writing besides philosophical essays. His first choice was plays and novels. His first novel La Nausée is his most compact philosophical work of fiction. After the publication of his most important philosophical work, Being and Nothingness, in 1943, his success was swift and resounding. Later on he published a number of novels, plays, and short stories and a few philosophical and psychological works. The success of his published works enabled him to give up teaching in 1944 and devote his time entirely to writing.

Although Sartre is mainly known as an atheist, he is a stern moralist who teaches above all things the need to be responsible and

[1] Jean Paul Sartre, What is Literature? Trans. by B. Frechtman. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), pp. 203-204.

[2] Ibid., p. 231.

mature. Though he maintains the view that the existence of man is unjustifiable in this world, he believes that the world can be changed for the better, but that change demands a resolute effort on the part of the individual existent.

The difference between Kierkegaard and Sartre is primarily a religious difference. Sartre bravely accepts the non-existence of God and reconciles himself to the fact that man is a useless passion. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, encounters and resolutely affirms a higher power which constitutes the self and provides the condition for the courage to be one's self in which despair is taken up. But independent of their respective differences, both Kierkegaard and Sartre maintain a philosophy of human finitude. In the course of my thesis, I try to show that Sartre has borrowed the main themes of his philosophy from Kierkegaard, though these have led him in the opposite direction; and that in Sartre there is a mixture of humanism and religion. He has both a humanist intelligence and a religious sensibility. Both philosophers have operated against Kantian and Hegelian background and this accounts for a large part of their similarity.

PART TWO: THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF THEIR PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER I

METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The question that I shall pose in this part of the thesis is whether Kierkegaard's brand of existentialism provides an appropriate philosophical basis for Sartre, or in other words, to what extent Kierkegaard's philosophy can be said to provide the basis for Sartre's. In dealing with this question, I shall here, in different chapters, compare the main themes of their philosophy with a special reference to their ethical implications.

Origin of Their Philosophy Against Hegelian Idealism. Human existence has always been a problem for man, the rational animal, who, because of his faculty of rational reflection, could not help thinking critically about his own life and about life in general, comparing his own mode of existence with that of other creatures. Existentialism has risen in modern Europe because the steadily increasing pressures of collectivism and abstract idealism have forced the individual to a resolute seeking of self-affirmation. Although the roots of existentialism have been traced back as far as Socrates, the philosophical thought which leads to the development of existentialism in its modern form, stems from Kierkegaard, who began from existence and protested vehemently against any possibility of systematic philosophy. Sartre's reaction against philosophical systematizing and abstraction has been inherited

from Kierkegaard through the German philosophers, Husserl and Heidegger.

Kierkegaard against Hegel. In the day of Kierkegaard, Hegelianism was the ruling philosophy in Germany as well as in Denmark. Kierkegaard's indictment against his age is chiefly directed against this Hegelianism, which, in the Postscript, he refers to as 'the system'. The more significant is his deep antagonism toward any explanation of the world in terms of 'abstract thought'--his reason for rejecting the Hegelian synthesis. To him thought without action is meaningless. Knowledge is always in some sense action. In his philosophy, there is no place for the "passionless calm of purely speculative knowledge",[1] which Hegel seems to recommend in his Science of Logic. It is mainly on this ground that Hegel becomes the chief offender to Kierkegaard.

Hegel has a system which explains everything. There is no room in it for the mystery of God or the contingency of creatures. Technically, his solution is called 'idealism' because all being is ultimately a part or manifestation of the one 'Spiritual Being' or 'Absolute Mind' which really is. Thus, in his philosophy, the history of the world becomes the actual realization of an infinite, eternal and objective mind. The state, for Hegel, is the full reality of the moral idea and the individual realizes himself and derives his true value through participation in the life of the state.

Kierkegaard had two fundamental objections to this and to any total idealism. In the first place, he was convinced that Hegel could not prove that everything was somehow part of the working out of 'Absolute

[1] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Science of Logic, trans. W. H. Johnston and L. G. Struthers (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1929), Vol. I, p. 51.

Mind'. Man's contingent existence does not fit into Hegel's pattern and so remains unexplained. "One thing always escaped Hegel--what it was to live."[1] His second objection to the Hegelian system was that it undersold the individual. Hegel talked about eternal 'Absolute Mind' but he forgot to mention the only existing reality we know--the individual beings which we are and which are around us. To Kierkegaard, these individuals are important and they cannot be forgotten in the name of universal laws.

In the eyes of Kierkegaard, the Hegelian system is a fantastic distortion of truth. It does not know, to speak in his words, "what it means to be a human being. Not indeed, what it means to be a human being in general; for this is the sort of thing that one might even induce a speculative philosopher to agree to; but what it means that you and I and he are human beings, each one for himself."[2]

In Kierkegaard's opinion, to know what it means to be an individual human being is to realize that thought is incapable of revealing reality. Man achieves reality not by speculation but by experience and Hegel, by attempting to know the world without first knowing himself as the subject who experiences the world, puts the cart before the horse and thus becomes a comic figure. Kierkegaard insists that philosophy is quite different from other intellectual pursuits in a very fundamental way, namely, that its goal is not merely to arrive at a certain system of propositions, however logical the system and however true the propositions are of which it is composed. A philosophy, for him, is not a body

[1] The Journals of Kierkegaard. Entry 610, p. 175.

[2] Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. D. F. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p.109.

of propositions but a way of life. People want to know not just what propositions to accept, but what kind of life to live, and on what basis.

Because of this conception of philosophy, Kierkegaard states that: "(A), a logical system is possible; (B), an existential system is impossible." [1] "We live,"he says,"in an indeterminate world, immersed for ever in contingency--for which there can never be a 'system'. For if action is real action it must make a difference, and reality as the sum of these differences cannot be 'known'. We can know a determinate world; we can act only in an indeterminate world, and obviously such a world cannot be comprehended systematically."[2]

Sartre and Hegel. Kierkegaard's extreme emphasis upon individuality serves to reinforce Sartre's atheistic impulses. The absence of religious faith in Sartre has undermined man's confidence in cosmic values, and has made the decisions of the individual the last stand of a desperate humanism. The philosophy of Kierkegaard is really a philosophy of human existence. He demands a strict separation of essence and existence and points out that we "reason from existence, not toward existence."[3] But Sartre arrives at the position of saying that "existence precedes essence" from his atheism " . . . if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence. . . . That being is man . . . Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it."[4]

[1] Kierkegaard, The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 99.

[2] G. Price, The Narrow Pass (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1963), p. 102.

[3] S. A. Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans. D. F. Swenson, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), p. 31.

[4] J. P. Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, trans. P. Mairet, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1948), pp. 27-28.

If existentialism is regarded as an attitude, an approach, then Sartre is a betrayer of existentialism. Though he follows Kierkegaard in rejecting Idealistic philosophy and Hegel's method of depicting the universe in terms of 'Abstract Mind', Sartre is nevertheless intensely Hegelian in his passion for synthesis, in his attachment to the dialectic and in his rationalism.

In her review of Sartre's Being and Nothingness, Iris Murdoch, a very perceptive critic, has accused Sartre of adopting some Hegelian concepts. The very title of the review--"Hegel in Modern Dress"[1]--shows the nature of her accusation. Sartre there is accused of building a Hegelian type of system. "Being and Nothingness is a very long and almost totally Hegelian work concerning the nature of human consciousness."[2] The notion of the world as a synthesis of being and non-being (nothingness) recalls both the structure and the conclusions of Hegelian logic. In Murdoch's opinion, Sartre substitutes a psychological perspective for Hegel's historical perspective.

It is important to remark that Kierkegaard never used the word 'existentialism' which means that he was never engaged in formulating a new system, a new 'ism', but was merely protesting against the prevailing systems. This distinguishes him sharply from the so-called and self-styled 'Existentialist' like Sartre who loves to describe himself as an existentialist philosopher. Kierkegaard's point is that existence can never be understood systematically but only in the ethical choice and thus his philosophy of existence is subjective existential thought.

1 & 2 Iris Murdoch, "Hegel in Modern Dress", The New Statesman and Nation, Vol. 53, (May 25, 1957), p. 675.

Sartre's philosophy of existence, on the other hand, is characterized by a fundamental ontology of phenomenological form. It means that Sartre's aim is to achieve a systematic philosophy and to analyze systematically the nature of whole existence with man at the centre. His phenomenological ontology does in fact mean a new system of existence. In this sense Sartre is, to use the words of Kierkegaard, an 'objective' 'speculative philosopher' whom Kierkegaard has criticized so severely in the beginning of the 'Postscript'.[1]

In writing philosophy, Sartre has become extremely dogmatic; and if we adopt Kierkegaard's point of view, Sartre's Being and Nothingness should be regarded as dogmatic in the sense that certain principles are needed to be granted in order that the so-called descriptions in which it consists can take place. The first and the most noteworthy of these principles is that God does not exist. One cannot proceed a single step in Sartre's philosophy without assuming this principle. Another important assumption of his philosophy is the intuition that man is completely free and on the analysis of this his ontology models itself. If Sartre had to follow a strictly Kierkegaardian form of existential philosophy, his Being and Nothingness would not have been possible. In Kierkegaard's philosophy there is no place for dogma and so from his point of view, Sartre is not justified in his views as expressed in Being and Nothingness.

Existing Thinker. The conviction of the primacy of existence is shared by both Kierkegaard and Sartre. Their concern with the individual, personal aspects of being, places them in opposition to those philosophical

[1]Kierkegaard, The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 49-55.

views which allow the act of existing to be submerged in ideal forms or essences.

Kierkegaard's opinion. For Kierkegaard, "Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis."[1] According to him, abstract thought "ignores the concrete and the temporal, the existential process, the predicament of the existing individual arising from his being a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal situated in existence."[2] Because of this conviction Kierkegaard says against the Cartesian 'cogito ergo sum' that, "There is no conclusion here, for the proposition is a tautology."[3] Kierkegaard's intent to accuse Cartesian dictum is to show that the philosophical tradition which begins from Descartes makes the mistake precisely in the pre-occupation with the thinking self to the neglect of the existing self. "The real subject is not the cognitive subject, since in knowing he moves in the sphere of the possible; the real subject is the ethically existing subject."[4]

According to Kierkegaard, the existing individual cannot but assimilate his experiences. He becomes concrete in his experience, and the experience becomes a determining factor in his personality. Kierkegaard finds 'interestedness' as one of the main characteristics of the existing individual and, for him, in this 'interestedness' consists the

[1] S. A. Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, Anchor Book, trans. W. Lowrie (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1954), p. 146.

[2] Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 267.

[3] Ibid., p. 281.

[4] Loc. cit.

reality of the existing thinker and this distinguishes him from abstract thinker. "Abstract thought is disinterested, but for an existing individual, existence is the highest interest. An existing individual therefore has always a telos."[1] "Existence constitutes the highest interest of the existing individual, and his interest in his existence constitutes his reality."[2]

Kierkegaard conceives of man's spiritual progress, not as Hegel did, as a necessary manifestation of the historical self-development of absolute spirit, but as an entirely free personal development which the individual may or may not pass through, as he chooses. Existing individual born simply with possibilities which he may or may not actualize.

The existing man, for Kierkegaard, is the man exercised in possibilities. For him, the question is not to be what one is, but to become what one becomes, and this becoming is undetermined. "An existing individual is constantly in the process of becoming; the actual existing subjective thinker constantly reproduces this existential situation in his thoughts, and translates all his thinking into terms of process."[3] Thus the task of the existing thinker is to understand himself as an existing human being, essentially like all other human beings in status.

This task of becoming subjective, in Kierkegaard's philosophy, may be presumed to be the highest task, and one that is proposed to every

[1] Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 278.

[2] Ibid., p. 279.

[3] Ibid., p. 79.

human being. This leads one to draw the conclusion that Kierkegaard is primarily concerned with existence as it is experienced in man's concrete ethico-religious situation. He saw that passion and interest are fundamental for an understanding of existence. In his philosophy of existence essence, as universal possibility, is conjoined with the reality of existence.

Kierkegaard formulates three phases or stages of human existence--the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. The aesthete lives for the moment and is concerned with immediate enjoyment. According to Kierkegaard, inwardly every aesthetic mode of life is abysmal despair. But the understanding of despair in the aesthetic mode of life may mean the emergence and growth of the ethical life which is present whenever an authentic 'choice' becomes possible. The man who turns away from the enticement of the external world toward the inwardness of his own self gains with this decision his ethical existence. In contrast to aesthetic life, the ethical life has continuity. At this stage the self learns to know himself and to form himself.

But even this structure of human existence is still seriously incomplete. Although the ethical individual reaches out towards the universal, he is bound to remain within the confines of human immanence unless he discovers in his faith and sinfulness the way leading to divine transcendence. The authentic individual, according to Kierkegaard, is not only responsible to himself and to his fellow men; he is, above all, responsible to God. Thus the ethical mode of life is transformed into the religious mode when the existing individual chooses himself as sinner and hopes for divine forgiveness.

These phases of existence, according to Kierkegaard, involve an

endless process of striving, never finished, always toward the goal.

Sartre's opinion. Following Kierkegaard Sartre also wants to know what is good and bad for the individual man in his concrete situation. According to him, not only must we insist on concrete individual moral living, but this life must be completely self-determined by the individual and must in no way be the carrying out of some moral law. In his lecture on 'existentialism' which has since been published as Existentialism and Humanism, Sartre wants to show that existentialism is a humanism, since it " is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine, also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity."[1]

Sartre's view of human existence is somewhat similar to Kierkegaard's. Man is what he does. Possibilities that have not been actualized are empty and unreal. For Sartre, doing takes precedence over being, and the will to action becomes the central feature of man. Human reality, for Sartre is the connected succession of individual actions which constitutes the existing individual's past history, together with those actions which are added to the past by the continual realization of future projects. Man's original project is to realize certain transcendent goals, which represent the ultimate values of an individual.

His doctrine goes further indeed, and adds, "Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is."[2] There is for Sartre, as there was for Kierkegaard,

[1] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 24.

[2] Ibid., p. 41.

no achieved totality but only one in the process of being made.

It is true that there is no human nature outside the concrete subjects. But in this subject itself there are both that which makes it man and that which makes it a certain man, the two making a concrete totality. By his free effort, each man has to realize himself, has to form himself the concrete existent which makes of him this particular man. The sense of my existential becoming is implied in what I am essentially, and this becoming has a human value only to the degree that it is directed by a freedom which makes of this becoming my most personal work, my most authentic existing.

At the end of his lecture on 'existentialism', Sartre tries to clarify what he means by 'existantial humanism'. "Man is all the time outside of himself; it is in projecting and losing himself beyond himself that he makes man to exist; and, on the other hand, it is by pursuing transcendent aims that he himself is able to exist. Since man is thus self-surpassing and can grasp objects only in relation to his self-surpassing, he is himself the heart and centre of his transcendence. There is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. This relation of transcendence as constitutive of man (not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of self-surpassing) with subjectivity (in such a sense that man is not shut up in himself but forever present in a human universe)--it is this that we call existential humanism."[1]

Thus Sartre, though following Kierkegaard in some respects in analysing the characteristics of the existing thinker, differs from him

[1]Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 55.

in an important respect by completely denying the divine transcendence in which Kierkegaard finds the ultimate phase of human existence. For Sartre, human consciousness is the only transcendent and there is no other transcendental reality to influence and determine man's existence.

Subjective Truth

Kierkegaard's view. Against Hegelian system Kierkegaard argues that it neglects the fundamental fact that it is impossible to think of existence without passion. Kierkegaard uses the terms 'passion', 'earnestness', 'inwardness' and 'subjectivity' interchangeably. He means by these terms the eternal aspect when he says that 'man is a synthesis of temporal and eternal'. He says in The Concept of Dread that "Inwardness, certitude, is seriousness."[1]; and that he can express what seriousness is in another way. "If inwardness is lacking, the spirit is finitized. Inwardness is therefore eternity, or the determinant of the eternal in a man."[2]

Though Kierkegaard was always against Hegelian logical dialectic, he had no intention of dispensing with dialectic properly understood. Kierkegaard variously characterized his dialectic as 'dialectic of inward appropriation', 'existential' or 'qualitative' as distinguished from quantitative. While the quantitative dialectic of Hegel's logic cannot express the inward movements of the existential thinker as he apprehends himself in relation to a real becoming, Kierkegaard's 'qualitative dialectic' is mainly concerned with existence. It takes becoming

[1] S. A. Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, trans. W. Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 134.

[2] Loc. cit.

seriously and seeks, through the application of Socratic maieutic method, to elicit an inward appropriation of the truth which discloses itself in man's concrete existential movements.

The truth disclosed in Kierkegaard's qualitative dialectic is properly understood as an inward-appropriation. In Kierkegaard's life and works the meaning of existential truth is "an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness."[1] It is a translation of the abstract into the concrete, an ethico-religious appropriation of the ideal, an active practice and realization rather than any doctrinal knowledge. In short it concerns with 'how' rather than with 'what'. It is a way of life and a mode of existence. By his repeated statement that 'subjectivity is the truth', he does not say that each man is the measure of all things. But he means that only that is true which the individual existing thinker has grasped by his own efforts, encountering it through commitment and making it part of his own nature. He thus tries to emphasize that an initial act of will and a constant effort toward personal appropriation are necessary parts of the process by which truth is known to us. The reality of every man's existence proceeds from the 'inwardness' of man. "The importance of the subject lies in the fact that his most passionate concern is to clarify the process he is involved in and to impose some meaningful pattern upon it."[2]

The individual is an original being, isolated from the guiding voice of universal principles. In making a decisive resolve, the existential subject is totally unmediated and hence isolated and absolute. For

[1]Kierkegaard, The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 182.

[2]Price, Narrow Pass, p. 119.

Kierkegaard, here lies the mystery and meaning of reality. Man must will decisively to be himself and the important thing is this process as a process. Kierkegaard is at one with Lessing, a German dynamist, that truth lies in the search for an object, not in the object sought. He finds behind all the activity of the self the pressure of the existential imperative.

It is in the subjective sphere, in the inward relation of oneself to oneself and to the subjectivity of others, that one becomes aware of God and of a relation to Him. The existing thinker synthesizes the infinite and the finite and when the problem of synthesis is placed within Christian categories, he is confronted with a situation from which he cannot remain detached. The time is there to stake his eternal salvation on the assertion of the truth that at a given moment in history, the infinite, eternal God became finite, temporal man. The existing thinker in this situation faces a crisis and whether he accepts or rejects the unbelievable, the choice is decisive for his life. If he accepts then, according to Kierkegaard, "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness" becomes "the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual."[1] Or, it proves that "When subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, the truth becomes objectively a paradox."[2]

Thus, reality for Kierkegaard is not a metaphysical problem at all. It has to do simply with the seriousness of the existing individual who has become real by committing himself to some ethico-religious

[1] Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 182.

[2] Ibid., p. 183.

decision. Existentially, there is no truth without the crisis of choice and decision.

Sartre's idea of truth. Sartre borrowed the Kierkegaardian notion of 'passion' and 'subjectivity' but in the name of 'engagement' or 'commitment'. What he says about 'engagement' or 'commitment' is quite reminiscent of Kierkegaard's notion of 'passion' and 'subjectivity'. Sartre states in his lecture on 'existentialism': "What is at the very heart and centre of existentialism, is the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realises himself in realising a type of humanity."[1] For him, there is no difference between free being, being as self-committal and absolute being.

With Kierkegaard he agrees that for existential philosophy, "Our point of departure is, indeed, the subjectivity of the individual; and that for strictly philosophic reasons. It is not because we are bourgeois, but because we seek to base our teaching upon the truth, and not upon a collection of fine theories, full of hope but lacking real foundations."[2] He attacks the Cartesian 'cogito ergo sum' by saying that "Every theory which begins with man, outside of this moment of self-attainment, is a theory which thereby surpasses the truth . . . Before there can be any truth whatever, then, there must be an absolute truth, and there is such a truth which is simple, easily attained and within the reach of everybody; it consists in one's immediate sense of one's self."[3] Thus here we find Sartre saying exactly the same thing as Kierkegaard but in

[1] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 47.

[2] Ibid., p. 44.

[3] Loc. cit.

different language.

Sartre is also akin to Kierkegaard in emphasizing the importance of subjective truth and holds that this subjectivity "theory alone is compatible with the dignity of man, it is the only one which does not make man into an object."[1] This statement of Sartre proves that he, following Kierkegaard, abuses abstract thought which dehumanizes a man by making him an object. Kierkegaard's equation of subjectivity with truth is essential to Sartrean existentialism. Although Kierkegaard uses this epistemological principle to defend Christianity, this does not deter Sartre from using it. Sartre, the self-described atheistic existentialist adopts this principle as his starting point. He begins with the given in the field of subjective awareness and seeks to analyse its structure.

But in emphasizing subjectivity, Sartre goes beyond Kierkegaard, and here he means by subjectivity not the individual consciousness but human subjectivity in general. Man is what he makes himself; but when a man chooses for himself, he chooses likewise for all men.

If one refers to Sartre's novels and plays, then one finds that when each of Sartre's characters acts, he is not acting merely under the pressure of his own choice and striving forward toward a different historical destination from that of the other characters, in the fashion which Kierkegaard's individual 'chooses himself' and destines himself for his own particular historical conclusion. The reality of Sartre's characters is not the mere subjective reality which Kierkegaard's individual acquires by his self-differentiating action. Kierkegaard's

[1] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, pp. 44-45.

subjectivity is a blend of truth, and what is really individual; whereas in Sartre's subjectivism,though there is the trace of what is individual, one could also find some sort of arbitrariness.

CHAPTER II

KIERKEGAARDIAN AND SARTREAN CONCEPT OF WORLD

Concept of Man

In Kierkegaard. "If man was to be the key to reality then he must first provide the key to his own. And this meant trying to understand him afresh in the light of the material his own self provided."

"To this end Kierkegaard initiated a new approach to the study of man, one of introspection and self-analysis."[1] Kierkegaard defines man in terms of a dialectic--a dialectic of relationships: "Man is a synthesis of the soulish and the bodily. But a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third factor. This third factor is the spirit."[2] The self, according to Kierkegaard, is a mysterious unity of physical and psychic activity. There is no such thing, for him, as a body or a mind, but only bodily events and mental events, which are synthesized into the living pattern of the self.

It seems that Kierkegaard attempts to arrive at a pre-cognitive level of experience which undercuts the subject-object dichotomy and he speaks of the priority of the ethically existing self over the thinking self of Descartes. The reflexive character of selfhood through which

[1] Price, Narrow Pass, p. 12.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 39.

the self relates itself to itself is that which makes possible a knowledge of one's self and choice of one's self. The self can have knowledge of itself through becoming 'objective' to itself. Selfhood involves the possibility of self-transcendence in knowledge. The self can experience itself in its immediacy through suffering and then it can transcend itself and see itself as a particular suffering self. In all self-knowledge the reflexive and duplex character of existence is presupposed. " . . . It may be said that existence did not begin with the immediate, since the immediate never is as such, but is transcended as soon as it is. The beginning which begins with the immediate is thus itself reached by means of a process of reflection."[1]

Kierkegaard describes the self as related to itself in the consciousness of an infinite passion. Self-consciousness is not contemplation and according to Kierkegaard he who thinks that it is has not understood himself. Existing thinker is always in the process of becoming and so cannot be a finished product as the object of contemplation. Besides being a rational or intellective phenomenon, consciousness is the decisive criterion of the self; and is inextricably bound up with will and feeling. "The more consciousness, the more self; the more consciousness, the more will, and the more will the more self."[2] The self is not a something which has intellect, will, and emotion; the self is a becoming consciousness of which intellect, will and emotion are emergent modalities.

Kierkegaard is concerned with life as a dialectical process in

[1]Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 102.

[2]Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, Anchor Books, p. 162.

which the special feature is the restless interchange in the communication between God and man. God, surely, has a truth for man; but it is not what it seems. It must be accepted and put into life and inner experience, then projected and externalized, only to be absorbed once more. The truth is absolute but our experience of it is inconclusive and inflicted always with the restless and dynamic quality which attends all human experience.

Sartrean notion of man. It should be noted that Sartre is among the very few who have grasped the full significance of what Kierkegaard had to say about the nature of human reality. His Being and Nothingness can be said to spring directly from the aesthetic works in which Kierkegaard first gives his teaching about human being. Sartre, of course, completely ignores the religious context which Kierkegaard regards as decisive. "According to Sartre, the being of human reality cannot be classed as an ontological super addition but as a faultiness of being, as a gap in the completeness of being . . . This gap is not a new positive state; it is nothing."[1] In other words, consciousness bears upon a reality which is itself non-conscious. The self, Sartre states, finds itself in a characterless world where both are meaningless, but by purposive action the self and the world emerge as significant existents.

Sartre distinguishes between two kinds of mental activity, which he refers to as the "Cartesian cogito" and the "prereflective cogito".[2] He corrects Descartes' cogito by saying that the Cartesian thinking self

[1] Emmanuel Mounier, Existentialist Philosophies, trans. Eric Blow (London: Rockliff, 1948), p. 42.

[2] J. P. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. H. E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. liii.

is attained as a unity of states and acts of reflective knowledge, in which consciousness intends itself as an object. But, for Sartre, before the reflective cogito which is merely a secondary and derivative condition of consciousness, there is a pure act of consciousness. This pure act of consciousness is a more primitive situation in which consciousness is concommitantly aware of itself in the very act of knowing some object. In knowing something, there is also at least an implicit awareness of doing the knowing. This suggests that at the source of all objects, including the ego, is the pure act of consciousness, the 'prereflective cogito'. The fundamental reality of human subjectivity is not a personal self but a non-posited, non-objectified, prereflexive consciousness.

Sartre attempts to demonstrate that consciousness acts by negation, that consciousness is non-substantial or 'nothingness'. Nothingness not in the sense of absence but a nihilating activity. Human 'consciousness', 'nothingness' and 'being-for-itself' are interchangeable terms in Sartre's philosophy. Nevertheless, consciousness is nothing but consciousness of some object and the region of being which is composed of the objects of consciousness is termed 'being-in-itself' because, unlike 'being-for-itself', it is as it appears.

There is prominently present in Sartre's philosophy the audacity in outlining the absurdity of man. Man is his own nothingness, a useless passion, a victim of bad faith, destined only for despair and disillusionment. Man's fundamental project is ultimately frustrated. Because, for Sartre, the aim of sincerity, wholly to be what one is, is logically unattainable. He finds, like Kierkegaard, that an essential characteristic of human reality is an incompleteness; but unlike Kierkegaard he concludes that human reality by being conscious of this incompleteness becomes frustrated.

According to Sartre, man or 'being-for-itself' wants to be God, desires to be his own cause. That is, he strives incessantly to be wholly and self-identically being-in-itself but without sacrificing the self-consciousness which distinguishes him from 'being-in-itself'. But the achievement of this, Sartre says, is a logical impossibility.

"He is what he is not and he is not what he is; he is the nihilation of the contingent In-itself in so far as the self of this nihilation is its flight ahead toward the In-itself as self-cause. Human reality is the pure effort to become God without there being anything which so endeavours."[1] Every human desire, for Sartre, is an expression of this effort. But God does not exist and cannot exist. This is to say that man's freedom and all his choices and all his projects not only tend to the impossible but are vitiated and corrupted by the lie and 'bad faith'. Sartean man is thus primarily a useless passion.

Although Sartre followed Kierkegaard in emphasizing the subjective choice and decision of man, he rejects Kierkegaard's view of religiouness which ultimately justifies man's existence and this rejection leads him to the pessimistic conclusion that 'man is a useless passion'. But for Kierkegaard, man is not a useless passion, rather he is a passion to be. "This passion to be arises from man's unique investiture, and its continued presence and unremitting demand, according to Kierkegaard, are the guarantee that man's struggle to be is not a useless one."[2]

[1] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 575-576.

[2] Price, Narrow Pass, p. 42.

Phenomenal World

In Kierkegaard. The existential meaning of the world is disclosed only when the question is subjectively formulated: 'how do I exist in the world?' Here Kierkegaard's distinction between the objective accent which falls on the 'what' and the subjective accent which falls on the 'how' has a great influence. Only through man's experience of estrangement, in his anxiety and despair, do the various horizons of the existential world disclose themselves.

Kierkegaard is often accused of lacking a sense of universality completely. In fact, his views in The Postscript that (a) the ethical reality of the subject is the only reality and (b) that all realities other than his own, the subject encounters only in the mode of possibility, by thinking them,[1] seem to imply this accusation. But what is evident from his works at large is that he does not intend to deny the reality of the world. His point is that the question of the reality of the world, whatever interest it may have for the scientific or metaphysical investigation, is totally irrelevant to the ethical concern of the individual.

In my discussion of Kierkegaard's ethics, it will be made evident that the isolation of the individual in his freedom is not a denial of the world, but an indispensable part of ethics. Kierkegaard, in all ways, denies any possibility of a collective or social solution to the concrete problems of human life.

[1] Kierkegaard, The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 280.

Sartrean world. Self and the world are correlative concepts in Sartrean ontology. Without the world there is no selfhood, and without selfhood, without the person, there is no world--is his formulation. The environmental world is indissolubly linked with man's existential projects. Sartre does not agree with Kantian distinction between phenomenon and noumenon. In his phenomenological ontology, the phenomena or the appearances are indicative of themselves and there is nothing concealed behind the phenomena or the appearances; they refer to nothing but themselves. Yet, Sartre admits that being is never exhausted in any of its particular phenomenal aspects. Being, in the totality of its aspects and manifestations, never becomes wholly translucent to consiousness.

In Sartre's thought, the world simply exists and to have any meaning, a conscious subject is required to sense it and to think about it.[1] Thus it is the human consciousness which reveals being by setting up patterns and relationships and meanings for things. But at the same time the human consciousness is quite well aware that it does not produce the world or bring it into existence, nor does its departure destroy the world.

Sartre, unlike Kierkegaard, concedes, though he admits no universal human nature, that there is a universality of human condition. Each human project, though each be individual, has universality in the sense that it is comprehensible to all men and every man, in choosing himself, constructs the universal. Sartre thus writes, "Although it is impossible to find in each and every man a universal essence that can be called human nature, there is nevertheless a human universality of condition."[2]

[1]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 170.

[2]Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, pp. 45-46.

By this condition Sartre understands, "with more or less clarity, all the limitations which à priori define man's fundamental situation in the universe. His historical situations are variable . . . But what never vary are the necessities of being in the world, of having to labour and to die there . . . In every purpose there is universality, in this sense that every purpose is comprehensible to every man."[1] Sartre affirms that individual choice is absolute, yet relative to the historical epoch, and that to be absolute is the same as to be universally comprehensible. His motivation in this passage is difficult to ascertain.

Sartre affirms that we experience ourselves in the presence of others and others are as certain for us as ourselves. Hence, for him, subjectivity becomes intersubjectivity. He insists, furthermore, that others are indispensable to our existence as to our knowledge of self, since we acknowledge the fact that we cannot be something unless others recognize us as such. Thus the discovery of my self discloses to me at the same time the other person, as a free being set over against me. It is in this intersubjectivity that man decides what he is and what others are. The 'being-for-other' is, according to Sartre, a new dimension of my own being, my being-as-object.

This twofold opinion of Sartre leads to his partly individual and partly social ethic in contrast to Kierkegaard's ethic for the individual.

Communal World

For Kierkegaard. The world as immediately presented has an irreducible communal aspect and man's theoretical as well as practical

[1] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 46.

concerns with the world are existentially qualified by this aspect. Kierkegaard saw clearly the relevance of this communal character of existence when he writes, "This self which is the aim is not merely a personal self but a social, a civic self. . . The personal life as such was an isolation and hence imperfect; in the fact that through the civic life he comes back into his personality the personal life manifests itself in a higher form."[1]

Critics of Kierkegaard repeatedly level their attack against the apparent individualism which Kierkegaard affirms to the neglect of the social and communal character of existence. It is argued that Kierkegaard has viciously abstracted the individual from his social context and abandoned altogether any interest in authentic communal existence. It is true that Kierkegaard, in his fear of mass-mindedness, has placed such an emphasis upon individual decision that the solution of the problem of community becomes most difficult in his philosophy. Yet from the above passage it can be said that his emphasis on the reality of the individual does not necessarily entail an existential solipsism. His point is that ultimately, if the individual is to achieve authentic existence, he must make his decision alone.

For Kierkegaard: "The ethical requirement is imposed upon each individual, and when it judges, it judges each individual by himself."[2] "This implies that there is no immediate relationship, ethically, between subject and subject."[3] Kierkegaard argues that human existence is

[1] S. A. Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, trans. W. Lowrie (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1959), p. 267.

[2] Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 284.

[3] Ibid., p. 285.

a mode of being in which subjectivity is the truth and that such truth cannot be communicated directly.

It is obvious that a man cannot communicate the subjective truth--the existential appropriation of his thought. Nevertheless it is Kierkegaard's contention that the existential thinker can and does communicate, but he communicates indirectly. "If direct communication is excluded as a means of communication suitable for existents, it is because it is an outward expression of what is established inwardly; it does not flow from the heart of one existent into the heart of another existent, and does not bear the stamp of communicated being."[1] Thus indirect communication is necessary whenever the truth to be communicated is of the nature of inwardness.

This indirect communication, according to Kierkegaard, must be doubly reflected, by analogy to the 'double reflection' of the existential thinker. By a first reflection, the author of the communication conceives his content as a possibility and gives his expression in language. But by a second reflection, the form of his communication must express his existential relation to what he communicates. "The form of a communication must be distinguished from its expression. When the thought has found its suitable expression in the word, which is realized by means of a first reflection, there follows a second reflection, concerned with the relation between the communication and the author of it, and reflecting the author's own existential relationship to the Idea."[2]

All communication between men must operate in the medium of ideas

[1]Mounier, Existentialist Philosophies, p. 73.

[2]Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 71

and concepts, in the realm of possibilities. "The only reality that exists for an existing individual is his own ethical reality. To every other reality he stands in a cognitive relation; but true knowledge consists in translating the real into the possible."[1] It is only his own reality to which the individual has direct access as reality. To other realities he can relate only cognitively, by translating them into possibilities. Possibility in this context means the manner of my relation to realities other than my own.

Truth communicated as possibility must be such as to compel the learner to face the problem of actualizing it. But the learner must not understand the communication directly as a system of ideas. He must realize rather that he is required to remake his own existence in terms of this new communication. This is not to identify understanding with acceptance. The learner may understand the communication in such a way as to reject it. But he does in no way understand it, until he explores in the passion of his own inwardness its significance for his existence. Subjective truth is essentially something to be done, to be realized in the subject, to be assimilated in inwardness; and "the inwardness of the understanding would consist precisely in each individual coming to understand it by himself."[2]

Sartrean communication. Kierkegaardian type of indirect communication could be traced out in Sartre, when in his book What is Literature? he presents the thesis that the function of the writer is not to communicate a truth to others but rather to arouse the free consciousness of others.

[1] Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 280.

[2] Ibid., p. 71

A crucial problem for consciousness, according to Sartre, is its relation with other consciousness from which it seems so separated. When another looks at me, I am in the midst of a world I cannot see. The other holds the secret of what I am, and possesses me by being conscious of me. I am an object to other's consciousness. For that reason, according to Sartre, my being for another is essentially a conflict. While I seek to liberate myself from the control of the other person, the other person tries to be liberated from my control over him. "Two men together represent two beings who are lying in wait for the opportunity to enslave each other in order that they can avoid being enslaved."[1]

Since, for Sartre, social life is a mutual robbing of the other man's subjective integrity, the basic social form is hate; and accordingly, all other attitudes of man are variations on this dominant theme of hatred. Throughout his whole philosophical and literary works, Sartre repeatedly insists on the impossibility of overcoming hatred through motives of love, personal respect or belief in God. For him, it is just as natural to desire a loving, interpersonal, human community as to desire to become God. But both these desires are equally impossible to achieve.

Human relations are, in Sartre's view, not so much a result of history as a result of human activity. There is no human nature, or universal character of man. There is only individual man known through his praxis and his project. All human relations start with the acceptance of the other for what he is, an acceptance which is based upon his

[1] Mounier, Existentialist Philosophies, p. 77.

praxis or individual performances. In all this is observed Sartre's continual attempt to discover a human world, a world which is indeed matter and yet has at the same time a dimension which is more than matter. Man needs to change, for his very subsistence, the material world in which he lives and it is in this act of transforming material world that he makes himself and builds up the insecure relationship of mutual obligation with the other man.[1]

Sartre believes that the extreme situations that men face in this present revolutionary age can only be expressed in a literary work. For him, communication is necessarily ambiguous. And this ambiguity starts when we try to determine the nature of the 'look' which I fix on another-person or which another-person fixes on me. A rational imparting of meaning in language is only possible by a conventional agreement about the meanings of words and even then, according to Sartre, there is no completely adequate communication since the meaning is particularized in the particular act of expression.

[1] Wilfred Desan, Marxism of J. P. Sartre (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1965), p. 93.

CHAPTER III

FREEDOM

Perhaps the most persistent problem in Kierkegaard's and Sartre's effort at self-understanding is the problem of freedom; and it is here that a comparison between Kierkegaard and Sartre is of great importance. Both Kierkegaard and Sartre agree that man is free; but what proofs do they offer for the freedom of man? To what extent is Kierkegaard's concept of freedom a background for Sartre's thought?

In Kierkegaard's philosophy. The emphasis on freedom as an indelible character of human existence emerges throughout the whole of Kierkegaard's writings. "But what, then, is this self of mine?" To answer this question Kierkegaard writes, "If I were required to define this, my first answer would be: It is the most abstract of all things, and yet at the same time it is the most concrete--it is freedom."[1] The self is freedom.

Kierkegaard suggests that this freedom can be phenomenologically described and accordingly describes it as the dialectical synthesis of possibility and necessity. "The self is freedom. But freedom is the dialectical element in the terms possibility and necessity."[2] To

[1] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, Anchor Books, p. 218.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, Anchor Books, p. 162.

understand the self as freedom is first of all to understand the self in its dynamism as a self which is in the process of becoming itself. The self is intrinsically dynamic. It is never completed and finished. It is always actualizing, never actualized. It strives, changes, seeks to become that which it is not yet.

For Kierkegaard, the key term for the understanding of man is 'spirit' or freedom. "When discussing the creation story, he tells us that in Adam, before the Fall, while he is still innocent, the spirit is dreaming. But after God's prohibition, when a choice is made, the spirit is posited, and Adam is aware of himself as a self-conscious being with infinite possibilities. A new factor has emerged, not the self-consciousness (which was already present or Adam would not have known whom God was addressing) but a certain modification of it--the will."[1] And freedom is this will.

Kierkegaard sees the self as a highly individualized pattern which has emerged from a synthesis of the soulish and the bodily by the spirit or will. And the decisive factor in this emergence is the will, the freedom. But "Kierkegaard sadly remarks that a man will only exert such an act of will under extreme pressure, and only when he is brought to that dark frontier where an unavoidable decision must be made."[2]

The way to freedom passes by 'fear and trembling', because these exercise us in possibilities. But besides the dreadful possibilities a man may discover the divine possibilities which, according to Kierkegaard, religion offers to us. In this manner he will finally be able to

[1] Price, Narrow Pass, p. 37.

[2] Ibid., p. 40.

accomplish the free act by which he will take on himself what he is or what he becomes.

Kierkegaard writes, "But freedom is the true wonderful lamp; when a man rubs it with ethical passion, God comes into being for him. And behold, the spirit of the lamp is a servant. . . But whoever rubs the wonderful lamp of freedom becomes himself a servant--the Spirit is Lord."[1] According to Kierkegaard, inside freedom itself there is an action of grace, of a divine necessity which guides us and by which we can say 'yes' to our necessity and reality. This helps us to the understanding of what Kierkegaard means when he says that in the utmost freedom there is no question of choice.

Freedom, for Kierkegaard, requires that the individual must become conscious of himself as the definite individual, with his specific talents, his specific character traits, his passionate interests, all functioning within a definite environmental context. In the act of choosing he is actually transforming outwardness into inwardness. He has his particular place by freely choosing it. As a product of choice he is pressed into the forms of reality.

Sartrean freedom. With this background of Kierkegaard's concept of freedom I will now proceed to examine Sartre's idea of freedom. Just as Kierkegaard has defined human self as freedom, so also freedom for Sartre is indistinguishable from human reality. Existence and freedom are identified. "What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the being of 'human reality'. Man does not exist first in order to be

[1] Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 124.

free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free."[1]

Both for Kierkegaard as well as for Sartre, it is the speciality of man that he alone is free. Sartre sharply distinguishes human being from the world of things. Things are merely what they are and are completely self-subsistent. In his language a thing is an 'en-soi', something in-itself. Man alone is pour-soi, for-itself, a consciousness of lack. And in this is the possibility of aspiration and of creation, of good and of evil. Sartre says, only that which is for-itself, which is the same as conscious being, can determine itself at every moment, projecting its future without depending on its past. Every moment of lived time is a moment of decision or of that avoidance or postponement of choice which is itself a decision. This activity of choosing constitutes freedom. Thus man dominates the existence of things since he sets himself apart from them in order to know them.

Sartre places the individual's whole freedom in his inherent power to project for himself the life he shall lead. According to him, man to whom this power is given is guilty if he does not put it to use. He must use his freedom fully in order to realize the possibility within him. Success is not important in Sartre's theory of freedom. "In addition it is necessary to point out to 'common sense' that the formula 'to be free' does not mean 'to obtain what one has wished' but rather 'by oneself to determine oneself to wish' (in the broad sense of choosing). In other words success is not important to freedom."[2]

[1] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 25.

[2] Ibid., p. 483.

For Kierkegaard, man cannot escape freedom; he cannot simply remain a non-self because he is driven to be somebody by a compulsion within him; and this existential imperative for him is self's 'eternal validity'. For Sartre, on the other hand, though there is no eternal validity for man, he is subject to the inescapable necessity of being free, an existential rather than a moral necessity which arises from the 'absurdity' of an existence that has 'nothingness' at its core. Man cannot be without being free. Because "man is condemned to be free,"[1] he cannot cease being free. Man does not have freedom, he is freedom. "Freedom is actually one", Sartre declares, "with the being of the For-itself."[2] This declaration is similar to Kierkegaard's view that self is freedom.

But Sartre goes further than Kierkegaard and claims that: "Nothing comes to it either from the outside or from within which it can receive or accept. Without any help whatsoever, it is entirely abandoned to the intolerable necessity of making itself be."[3] He explains the reason why the human reality is free. "Human reality is free because it is not enough. It is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been separated by a nothingness from what it is and from what it will be . . . The being which is what it is cannot be free. Freedom is precisely the nothingness which is made-to-be at the heart of man and which forces human-reality to make itself instead of to be."[4]

[1] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 34.

[2] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 453.

[3] Ibid., pp. 440-41.

[4] Ibid., p. 440.

If a man were a being without nothingness, it would be impossible to find in him any necessity for choice. A completely full and sufficient being, lacking nothing, could not be creative, at least not so far as self-creation is concerned. For Sartre: "Man cannot be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all."[1]

One of the main characteristics of Sartre's freedom is that it is unlimited. "No limits to my freedom can be found," says Sartre, "except freedom itself or, if you prefer, we are not free to cease being free."[2] Freedom, for Sartre, is total and infinite, "which does not mean that it has no limits but that it never encounters them. The only limits which freedom bumps up against at each moment are those which it imposes on itself."[3]

Sartre sees man's freedom in man's own mastery of all possibilities and not in the contingency that rests on God's choice among possibilities. For him, there is no God and man has all the freedom there is. Man's very existence is an unlimited power of self-determination. All else beyond his very existence as a conscious being, he himself projects.

It is clear that Sartre maintains the complete self-determination of the will. "Descartes," according to Sartre, "realized perfectly that the concept of freedom involved necessarily an absolute autonomy, that a free act was an absolutely new production . . . that consequently freedom and creation were one and the same."[4] But his main defect lies

[1] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 441.

[2] Ibid., p. 439.

[3] Ibid., p. 531.

[4] J. P. Sartre, Literary and Philosophical Essays, trans. Annette Michelson (London: Rider and Co., 1955), p. 183.

in the fact that for him, "the divine prerogative is, in the last analysis, an absolute freedom which invents Reason and Good and which has no limits other than itself and its fidelity to itself."[1] According to Sartre, "there is nothing more in this freedom than in human freedom."[2] So he suggests that man should "regain the creative freedom that Descartes placed in God."[3]

Thus Sartre has eliminated God from Descartes' view. For him man alone is supreme and free. He insists that there is nothing more in divine reality, than in human; therefore human freedom is not limited by "the pre-established order of eternal truths and by the eternal system of values created by God."[4] Sartre finds man in Descartes' system to be infinitely free only in so far as he walks in God's path; that is, in so far as he says no to evil. There is no creativity in this sort of freedom but only refusal. But to Sartre, freedom which is not creative is not worthy of the name; it is not freedom in the true sense. With Cartesian freedom, Sartre equally accuses Christian freedom which to him is 'false freedom'. He writes, "If man does not invent his God, if he does not construct Knowledge, he is only nominally free."[5]

The conclusion of all these arguments of Sartre is obvious: man must take over the freedom of God. There is no longer a human freedom

[1] Sartre, Literary and Philosophical Essays, p. 183.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Ibid., p. 184.

[4] Ibid., p. 181.

[5] Loc. cit.

limited by a divine freedom but a human freedom that is unlimited and unrestricted. In fact, infinite freedom which Descartes imposed on God, has been rendered by Sartre to man.

Thus although both Kierkegaard and Sartre emphasize the freedom of man, Kierkegaard's freedom is mainly a freedom of self-perfection in which man seeks to establish an absolute relationship with God; while Sartre's freedom is freedom of self-determination which finds its beginning with the assertion that God does not exist. He recognizes no divine order to which man must subordinate himself. For him, the fact of human freedom cannot be reconciled rationally with the existence of God.

CHAPTER IV

DREAD, MELANCHOLY, AND BOREDOM

In Kierkegaard's philosophy. The concept of dread or anguish is as fundamentally important in existential philosophy as freedom. All modern existentialists, beginning from Kierkegaard and including Sartre, stress the creative significance of dread. It was primarily through Kierkegaard that 'the concept of dread' came to be central to existential analysis. The phenomenon of dread as a universal determinant of human existence is the subject of a thorough examination by Kierkegaard in his book The Concept of Dread. Here he examines, with unique intellectual depth, the interrelationship of dread, non-being and freedom.

He carefully distinguishes between fear and dread. It is the peculiarity of dread that it cannot be rationally understood or explained. In existential dread man is not threatened by something definite, as is the case with fear, something that could be named or defined. "I must therefore call attention to the fact that it is different from fear and similar concepts which refer to something definite, whereas dread is freedom's reality as possibility for possibility. One does not therefore find dread in the beast, precisely for the reason that by nature beast is not qualified by spirit."[1] Thus only man can experience dread and in this dread something mysterious intervenes his relationship to the world.

[1]Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 38.

If we ask specifically, what constitutes the object of dread, according to Kierkegaard we must answer: it is nothingness. What threatens is 'nothing' and the man finds himself alone and lost in the void. "If then we ask further what is the object of dread, the answer as usual must be that it is nothing. Dread and nothing regularly correspond to one another."[1] Dread is distinguished from fear in the ordinary sense precisely because it is the fear of nothing.

Kierkegaard has variously defined dread as "the possibility of freedom"[2] and again as "the alarming possibility of _being able_".[3] He even speaks of dread as "_a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy_,"[4] considering the dialectical determinants in it. It is the state of realizing, as it were, that our possibility depends for actualization on us and on us alone. It is the primitive state which no individual can escape. Dread pursues the individual through his whole life. He must make his decisions in a lonely isolationism of existence. "Deep within every man there lies the dread of being alone in the world, forgotten by God, overlooked among the tremendous household of millions upon millions."[5]

It was Kierkegaard who first pointed out that the strange feeling of dread is the gateway to human freedom. In analysing _The Concept of Dread_, G. Price nicely puts it: "The formative influence in man is found

[1] Kierkegaard, _The Concept of Dread_, p. 86.

[2] _Ibid_., p. 139.

[3] _Ibid_., p. 40.

[4] _Ibid_., p. 38.

[5] _The Journals of Kierkegaard_, Entry 705, p. 220.

not in his rationality, nor in his conscience, nor in his sense of God, nor in his community-relationships, but in an insinuating dread, which, as the vertigo of freedom, accompanies all his activity as a prior and controlling factor."[1] Dread is 'the dizziness of freedom' where there is "the infinity of possibility, which does not tempt like a definite choice, but alarms and fascinates with its sweet anxiety."[2]

The dread of innocence in which man initially faces his freedom is, according to Kierkegaard, the presupposition of guilt and sin. "One might think that as soon as sin is posited dread would be annulled, dread having been defined as freedom's appearance before itself in possibility."[3] But Kierkegaard reminds us that such is not the case. Possibility in so far as it has undergone a qualification through the Fall makes dread reappear in a new guise. This new guise is dread in the context of an actualization which discloses a future that demands for the individual a choice of concrete alternatives. "So dread comes back again in relation to what was posited and in relation to the future."[4]

Thus according to Kierkegaard dread brings man to an awareness of his freedom. It is dread that breaks up the individual's gratification and satisfaction of everyday existence and thus isolates him and brings him to his solitude thereby making him free for the choice of his authentic possibilities. Dread thus discloses man's future and makes him aware of what he can become.

[1] Price, Narrow Pass, p. 63.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 55.

[3] Ibid., p. 99.

[4] Loc. cit.

Allied with dread, Kierkegaard finds the modes of boredom and melancholy, and here also he can be said to be the first of the existentialist philosophers to analyse these modes as distinctive traits of human condition. In fact, these two modes are the variations of dread. According to Kierkegaard, melancholy and boredom are the characteristics and result of the aesthetic mode of life.

He distinguishes between two kinds of boredom. "The first is 'partly an inborn genial aptitude, partly an acquired immediacy'. This is rare . . . The second kind is a different and far more dangerous reality. It arises from the centre of existence--and it is corrosive. The popular cure for it is work. But work does not cancel boredom . . . Boredom is the staling of existence, and its ground lies far below the level of conscious activity."

"The result of boredom is that a man is driven to reflect about himself--and this reflection has very grave side-effects, for it starts a doubt within the self about its own make-up and its future, and finally, about the value of life itself."[1]

Boredom and melancholy, like dread, confront man with his freedom and his decision-demanding possibilities. He is driven from one understanding to another and fails to find meaning in anything which he pursues. Finally at this stage, he is overcome with emptiness and meaninglessness. From the very childhood, melancholy was an immediately experienced reality for Kierkegaard. According to him, melancholy is a condition of existence itself, and not a mere psychological disturbance.

[1]Price, Narrow Pass, p. 166.

Kierkegaard thinks that "There comes a moment in a man's life when his immediacy is, as it were, ripened and the spirit demands a higher form in which it will apprehend itself as spirit."[1] And when the spirit finds itself, all the causes that produced melancholy vanish. Thus for Kierkegaard, "in a way melancholy is not a bad sign, for as a rule only the most gifted natures are subject to it."[2]

In Sartre's philosophy. As for Kierkegaard so also for Sartre dread or anguish denotes the states of mind in which man becomes conscious of his freedom. Each individual is alone in the running current of the absurd contingency of things. According to Sartre, neither family, nor social life, nor a meaningful past recorded in history can count the brute facts of self-experience. But anguish and dread and the isolated sense of guilt, are the facts of what is involved in human being.

According to Sartre, one of the primary characteristics of human life is the constant striving toward a projected goal which can never be fully attained. The projection of goal throws the individual to the necessity of choice, and for this free choice the individual himself is responsible. Individual responsibility in this sense means that there is no authority for the rightness of a decision which can serve as its justification and that the individual must bear the weight of his freedom in solitude. Consciousness of oneself as freedom, according to Sartre, comes only with the experience of anguish. "The anguish which, when this possibility is revealed, manifests our freedom to our

[1] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, Anchor Books, p. 193.

[2] Ibid., pp. 193-194.

consciousness is witness of this perpetual modifiability of our initial project. In anguish we do not simply apprehend the fact that the possibles which we project are perpetually eaten away by our freedom-to-come; in addition we apprehend our choice--i.e., ourselves--as unjustifiable."[1]

Following Kierkegaard, Sartre also distinguishes between fear and anxiety. He admits that like fear, anxiety does not arise from some definite object. The object of anxiety is simply 'nothing'. Man is anguished because he alone chooses and because he must choose. Anguish appears when the existing individual realizes that there is nothing between him and his life. "Anguish as the manifestation of freedom in the face of self means that man is always separated by a nothingness from his essence."[2] Sartre is undoubtedly indebted to Kierkegaard when he holds that anguish is the way our freedom reveals itself to consciousness.

Anguish is an inescapable condition of life. We cannot escape anguish even though we try. For Sartre, to try to escape anguish is to adopt the attitude of 'bad faith', of 'self-deception'. But such an attempt is doomed to failure because, for him, we are anguish just as we are freedom. Even in 'bad faith' we do not and in fact cannot escape anguish; for in order to try to escape it, conceal it from ourselves, we must already know it.

In Sartre's writing, together with anguish, boredom is also revealed as a determinant of existence itself. He elucidates the same point in his first novel La Nausee as Kierkegaard has formulated a

[1] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 464.

[2] Ibid., p.35.

century ago in his Either/Or. Roquentin, the central character in Nausea, expresses the basic phenomenon of boredom when he says: "I am bored, that's all. From time to time I yawn so widely that tears roll down my cheek. It is a profound boredom, profound, the profound heart of existence, the very matter I am made of."[1]

As Kierkegaard has already described that in his authentic boredom man is overcome with a feeling of emptiness and his activities and personal relations lose their meaning and their significance, so we find this emptiness and meaninglessness in Sartre's Roquentin. Increasingly Roquentin finds that he is no longer able to do what he wants to do; he feels his freedom is slipping away from him.

It is in dread that Roquentin becomes conscious of the impredictability of the universe; but when he looks for the cause of his dread he learns new truths: if the universe is contingent, it is also free. "Anguish then is the reflective apprehension of freedom by itself."[2] In this line Sartre asserts exactly the same thing as does Kierkegaard in The Concept of Dread.

[1] J.-P. Sartre, Nausea, trans. Lloyd Alexander (U.S.A.: New Directions Paper Book, No. 82, 1959), p. 210.

[2] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 39.

CHAPTER V

CHOICE AND SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

In Kierkegaard. The significance of the phenomena of choice and self-responsibility in existential thinking can hardly be overemphasized. Kierkegaard maintains that one's self-fulfilment can come only through a form of withdrawal from the world of immediacy. He further argues that with this requirement of withdrawal is an equally important demand that one must act responsibly in the midst of historical processes in which one finds one's self.

"The ordinary, actual man's thinking, feeling and intuitions are all subject to his will, to various choices which he makes about himself--which, again, are all subject to the dictates of the existential imperative; the primary factors in man, that drives him to seek self-fulfilment in terms of an ideal picture he has of himself."[1]

The concepts of choice and responsibility are interlinked. From the very beginning of human life the function of choice is central. Man is created free and so responsible. And, it is only by turning resolutely to himself, facing his freedom through the shouldering of responsibility and commitment, can the self tackle successfully the problem of dread and boredom.

To conceive man as the existent which determines its own essence

[1] Price, Narrow Pass, p. 103.

is to recognize that the most fundamental attribute of the human being is his capacity for choice. From this point of view man is most wholly and most truly human in his acts of choice. The sort of act which is in question is not an act of choice between a predetermined good and evil. What makes us fully and distinctively human is not choosing between willing good on the one hand and willing evil on the other, but consists rather just in choosing to will. This gives a clue to the meaning of Either/Or. "My either/or does not in the first instance denote the choice between good and evil; it denotes the choice whereby one chooses good and evil/or excludes them."[1] It consists in the bare fact that we genuinely make a choice. "It is not a question of the reality of the thing chosen, but of the reality of the act of choice."[2]

Here also is found Kierkegaard's subjective emphasis on 'how' rather than the objective emphasis on 'what'. What we commit ourselves to is, for Kierkegaard, less important than how we commit ourselves; the energy, the earnestness, the feelings with which we choose. For if we choose wrongly, the energy of our commitment, he thinks, will make our mistakes clear to us, whereas the indifferent objective man never commits himself with enough interest to find out how wrong he is.[3] Choice always involves an act of will. The crucial determinant in decision is not the deliberation, however important it might be, but what Kierkegaard calls "the baptism of the will."[4]

[1] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, p. 173.

[2] Ibid., p. 180.

[3] Ibid., p. 171.

[4] Ibid., p. 173.

Man chooses at every level of his existence. The awareness of the infinite possibility open to man creates the 'dizziness of freedom',[1] and he seeks for something to make him feel secure, to relieve him of the awful responsibility of freedom. It is in this primal act of every individual that man falls from freedom into bondage to the finite. And here is the original choice which though not necessary is universal. It is the choice to give up one's freedom and therefore one's self. This is the choice of the aesthetic level of existence.

But freedom is preserved even in man's state of fallenness. Kierkegaard's term 'choice' does possess the power to point to man's responsible involvement in the loss of his essential freedom. Thus choice implies responsibility which alone can explain the sense of guilt that accompanies the fall. The choice in which we flee from freedom is itself the affirmation of freedom, because before the original choice in which spirit in the sense of will is affirmed, there is no freedom. It is the original choice which affirms freedom even in its flight from freedom.

"The distinction between good and evil certainly exists for freedom, but not _in abstracto_. The misunderstanding at this point is due to the fact that freedom is commonly conceived as something other than it is, namely, as an object of thought. But freedom is never _in abstracto_. If one would grant freedom an instant to make a choice between good and evil, without being itself in either of the two positions, then precisely at that instant freedom is not freedom but a meaningless reflection."[2]

[1] Kierkegaard, _The Concept of Dread_, p. 55.

[2] _Ibid._, p. 99n.

From the above passage it is clear that freedom in the true sense posits the distinction between good and evil and makes moral choice possible. Before one posits freedom there is for him neither good nor evil; there is simply impulsive behavior determined by his natural condition.

As a consequence of the original choice freedom is lost and the individual falls into a bondage. The normal manifestation of the loss of freedom is expressed in the bondage to sin. He cannot choose the good for the good is freedom and it is precisely this that he has chosen to give up.[1] However, in the normal manifestation of this bondage man is still 'in the good' since he can still experience guilt. Thus man's freedom is not destroyed but simply bound. It becomes finite freedom, the freedom to affirm one's guilt, the freedom to accept responsibility for the loss of freedom.

In his encounter with other selves the individual is presented with a choice which, according to Kierkegaard, he still has the power to make. He is confronted with a fundamental choice: to be ethically responsible or aesthetically determined; to be a self or not.

Proper choosing is to choose one's self absolutely. For Kierkegaard, "in choosing absolutely I choose despair, and in despair I choose the absolute."[2] But what is this absolute? Kierkegaard's answer is: "It is I myself in my eternal validity."[3] The self which makes a man a man is nothing other than freedom. The absolute choice is

[1]Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 106.

[2]Kierkegaard, Either/Or, p. 217.

[3]Ibid., p. 218.

unlimited and unqualified in that one accepts complete responsibility for all decisions and for all their irreversible consequences.

If one does not posit one's self absolutely, one remains neutral toward the determinants by which one shall live. This position of indifference is termed the aesthetic stage of life. Though one avoids the absolute choice, one has by no means escaped the necessity of making choices because choice is an indispensable condition of human life. At the aesthetic stage one's behaviour is determined by the field of what is immediate, the factors not posited by the self. This eventually brings to a condition a despair.

The aesthetic personality who understands the essentiality of his despair is in a position to escape. "One cannot despair at all", writes Kierkegaard, "without willing it, but to despair truly one must truly will it, but when one truly wills it one is truly beyond despair; when one has truly willed despair one has truly chosen that which despair chooses, i.e., oneself in one's eternal validity. The personality is tranquilized only in despair, not by necessity, for I never despair by necessity, but by freedom, and only thereby does one win the absolute."[1]

Chosen despair is a total abandonment of any hope of finding one's completeness wholly within the variety of phenomenal events. This self which is chosen absolutely by choosing despair, is to be understood as a timeless existence in time and as such cannot be understood in a manner appropriate of objects of the empirical world. He who chooses himself absolutely enters the ethical stage of life.

According to Kierkegaard, it is only in repentance that one can

[1]Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, p. 217.

choose oneself absolutely. Repentance is so important for Kierkegaard because he thinks "repentance puts the individual in the most intimate connection and the most exact cohesion with a surrounding world."[1] Choosing in repentance is the ethical task for existence on the ethical level. It unites in itself the task of knowing the self which is to be chosen and the activity of transforming this factual existence in accordance with an ideal which is freedom. The result of this activity is the new self, a self qualitatively different from the self abandoned in repentance.

The final choice of man is either to live defiantly in the face of despair, or to employ his residual freedom to resign his autonomy. And here is the paradoxical character of the function of choice in Kierkegaard. Just as the very choice in which freedom is rejected is itself a free act, so the choice whereby one abandons complete self-determination is itself the condition for the revival of the original choice of freedom.

In Sartre. Priority of the individual--which owes its origin mainly to Kierkegaard--as a general characteristic of existentialist philosophy is also found in Sartre's philosophy. A man is what he wills to be. Man constitutes himself through the projects which he chooses in his personal freedom. Sartre's doctrine of absolute freedom implies absolute responsibility. Since we constitute ourselves, since we choose our own essence, whatever we are is the result of our own choice. If I am a failure, it is, according to Sartre, only because I have chosen to

[1]Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, p. 245.

fail; there is no one and nothing to blame but myself. "Thus, the first effect of existentialism", as Sartre finds, "is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders."[1]

Sartre holds that our responsibility extends considerably further than this. "I am thus responsible for myself and for all men, and I am creating a certain image of man as I would have him to be. In fashioning myself I fashion man."[2] Thus in choosing myself I act as a universal legislator who sets up standards for the whole of mankind. But even this is not the extent of my responsibility. Man is responsible for the world because he constitutes the world, not by creating it or giving it being, but by giving it the form and meaning that it has.

The absoluteness of Sartre's conception of human freedom is the source of many of the strongest features of his philosophy. It is a mistake to suppose, he concludes, that we can be made by the past; each of our acts is free in the sense that it wholly disconnected from what has previously happened, separated from it by 'nothingness'. Our nature consists in our choice of a future, not in a structure which has been built up in the past and now wholly determines us. Only in virtue of this choice, he thinks, can we be free. Man is totally responsible since he is absolutely and totally free. There can be no question of diminished or merely partial responsibility. The limitless freedom of choice in which man's existence consists is thus at the same time a boundless responsibility for what he makes of himself.

[1] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 29.

[2] Ibid., p. 30.

Following Kierkegaard, Sartre also emphasizes the genuineness of choice. What most truly counts for a man is the right of an independent choice. Nothing can compensate a man for the loss of his humanity in the subjugation of his will to the will of others. What is most important for a man is not what he has, but whether it is the outcome of his own choice or the choice of another. What we get out of life depends upon what we get, not upon what someone else gives.

Sartre's freedom is a freedom of self-determination; and this self-determination, for Sartre, involves something more creative than choice, when choice is conceived as nothing more than the selection of one among several possible means to an end. Its creative power extends to the selection or projection of ends themselves. For him, there is no ready-made alternatives presented by reason as objects of choice. There is no determinate goal of individual development, no ideal which exercises the attraction of an ultimate final cause, unless it be free self-development itself. Sartre goes quite far and extends man's power of self-determination to embrace the production of his own being.

The lack or nothingness about which Sartre speaks quite often is not simply a static, factual void in the being of man; but it can better be characterized as a desire. It is a hole which demands to be filled. It is a lack which we experience both as anguish and desire. We are both compelled by the lack toward becoming who we are and yet terrified by this radical freedom. This brings us to the question of original choice in Sartre's understanding of man. Man does not choose to be free. Man is freedom. "In fact we are a freedom which chooses, but we do not choose to be free. We are condemned to freedom,"[1] says Sartre.

[1]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 484-485.

Here we find Sartre expressing the opinion that men generally try to avoid their freedom. They avoid freedom by what he terms as 'bad-faith'. A man is guilty of 'bad-faith' when he tries to keep from changing, to remain the same, like an inanimate thing. He then renounces his right of individual choice and lets others choose for him, as when he accepts the ready-made values of his society. But this attempted flight from freedom is self-defeating; for even in bad faith he is choosing and changing himself by that choice, even though he is choosing to become an inanimate object. The very choice of avoiding freedom implies that he knows freedom.

Sartre is convinced that the meaning of every act of one's being is tied up with this fundamental choice which man is. For everyman there is an original choice which is his own peculiar quest of his being which he experiences as a lack. Man wants to avoid freedom, to become being-in-itself, to become God. This original choice does not issue from the careful deliberation upon alternative possibilities,for the motives and causes which affect that decision already reveal the character of that original choice. For Sartre, each particular expression of an individual is a manifestation of this original project. But man's fundamental project--the project to avoid freedom, to become God--is ultimately frustrated because God is impossible; and this frustration leads Sartre's man to the world of despair.

The centre of the contribution which Kierkegaard has made to existentialism is the significance of the act of choice, 'the baptism of the will'. What is important is that one shall stand in cross-roads where decision is called for, and that one shall make the choice with real earnestness. The consequence of this doctrine is that what is

morally relevant is not the outcome of the choice but the exercise of will which makes the choice possible. "As soon as one can get a man to stand at the cross-roads in such a position that there is no recourse but to choose, he will choose the right."[1]

This is what Sartre means when he has Orestes say in the play, The Flies: "I have done my deed, Electra,and that deed was good."[2] This is obviously an assertion of the intrinsic value of free choice. Before the decisive act Orestes was empty and light, but now he is heavy with burden of freedom. Before, he enjoyed the doubtful pleasures of aesthetic disengagement, now he experiences the reality of moral choice. To put it in this way is to recognize the debt which Sartre owes to Kierkegaard. Before Kierkegaard, The Flies would not have been possible.

But there are some important differences between these two philosophers' conception of choice. The difference mainly lies in the fact that Kierkegaard's doctrine of choice is based on the individual's ethical choice between indifference to and recognition of the absolute ethical antithesis: good and evil; whereas Sartre's doctrine of choice is based on the way in which a man chooses between what appears to him good and what does not.

The main characteristic of Sartrean choice is that it is entirely free, that there is no value (neither eternal nor temporal) which determines it. On the contrary the choice itself creates the value. Thus, when Sartre accepts the human problem roughly as defined by Kierkegaard, he rejects Kierkegaard's religious solution. For him the religious

[1] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, p. 172.

[2] J.-P. Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays (New York: Vintage Books (n.d.)), p. 108.

ideal is dead and offers no real promise to man. There are no values independent of man. Rather man must build his own world, and be solely responsible for it.

Sartre does not mean the same thing by the fundamental act of freedom as Kierkegaard does by the fundamental ethical choice in which the person chooses himself in his eternal validity. Consequently, in Sartre's view, the fundamental choice can be reversed at any moment. The dread and melancholy which penetrate the whole existence of Kierkegaard's aesthete, precisely because he does not choose to place himself under his eternal determination, i.e., he refuses to acknowledge himself as spirit, in the sense of freedom and will; this dread and melancholy are regarded by Sartre as that which constantly accompany choice.

Sartre's choice can be said to be a defiant determination to live without illusions regarding the ultimate success of man's desire to be God. This choice may be essential to the restoration of selfhood, but there remains one more essential choice. To choose to be oneself in autonomous defiance is to choose to remain in eternal bondage to oneself. But selfhood is precisely the continual transcending of one's self; and this is possible only for him who trusts in that power which continually calls him to choose to give up his self in order to become a self.

The contrast between Sartre's defiant choice and Kierkegaard's faith is clearly noticeable in the following passage: "Then comes defiance, which really is despair by the aid of the eternal, the despairing abuse of the eternal in the self to the point of being despairingly determined to be oneself. But just because it is despair by the aid of the eternal it lies in a sense very close to the true, . . . by

the aid of the eternal the self has courage to lose itself in order to gain itself. Here on the contrary it is not willing to begin by losing itself but wills to be itself."[1]

With Sartre, we find the extremity of choice. But to go beyond Sartre is to return to Kierkegaard, who chose to lose himself in order to find himself.[2]

[1]S. A. Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death (Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954), p. 201.

[2]Preston Cole, "The Function of Choice in Human Existence", The Journal of Religion, Vol. XLV, No. 3 (July, 1965), p. 201.

CHAPTER VI

DESPAIR, GUILT AND AUTHENTICITY

Despair in Kierkegaard. The human situation, as Kierkegaard sees it, is paradoxical by its very nature; for a temporal existent yet belongs to eternity. By 'eternity' Kierkegaard here means open to future. "Is it not the case that eternity is for an existing individual not eternity, but the future, and that eternity is eternity only for the Eternal, who is not in process of becoming?"[1] Our guide is now not speculative philosophy, but rather our deep feelings of despair. It is despair which, for Kierkegaard, is both the most wretched and the most helpful stage of man's sub-Christian existence.

According to his doctrine, a man generally lives his day-to-day existence below the religious level, which for him is the highest stage of life. Man either lives 'aesthetically' as an amoral or submoral hedonist, or 'ethically' by easily conforming to that moral value which enables him to function comfortably.

Kierkegaard speaks of man's despair as a disrelation in his inmost being. "Despair is the disrelationship in a relation which relates itself to itself."[2] The two basic elements of self are necessity and possibility. In Kierkegaard's opinion, it is despair which indicates

[1]Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 271.

[2]Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, Anchor Books, p. 148.

that a choice has not yet been made, but that it should be made.

Explicitly, persons on the aesthetic level experience despair only when they realize that the goals which they have been trying to achieve are transitory. Now since all aesthetic individuals aim at some form of immediate enjoyment, the transitoriness of goal is inevitable to it. It can therefore be said that all aesthetic individuals are potentially in despair although they are not always conscious of it. "So it appears that every aesthetic view of life is despair, and that everyone who lives aesthetically is in despair, whether he knows it or not. But when one knows it (and you indeed know it), a higher form of existence is an imperative requirement."[1]

Despair that can be found at the aesthetic level of existence is not genuine despair; because it does not demand the utter rejection of the aesthetic aim, but merely feels that it cannot be carried through. Genuine despair, on the other hand, pervades the whole personality. It paralyzes not only thought but action and feeling as well. But in the very act of choosing despair, we overcome it. In this act of choice, the aesthete is taking the first step toward the ethical. Through despair man finds himself for the first time in the isolation which is one of the indispensable conditions of choice; and in choosing despair, he is recognizing his unity with the given factual world and the totally new way by which he must reach it.

In the second part of The Sickness Unto Death, Kierkegaard is seeking to show that despair is not something that befalls one like a disease, but is inherent in man himself. It springs from the paradoxical

[1]Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, Anchor Books, p. 197.

relationship of man, the finite to the 'eternal' in him.[1]

In his analysis of various modes of despair, Kierkegaard subsumes all manifestations of despair under two primary forms: the despair of not willing to be oneself (the despair of weakness),[2] and the despair of despairingly to be oneself (defiant despair).[3] These two primary forms have a variety of expressions. Prior to the two fundamental forms of despair, there is what can be called a preliminary form of despair. This is "The Despair which is Unconscious that it is Despair, or the Despairing Unconsciousness of having a Self and an Eternal Self."[4]

The despair of not willing to be oneself involves a disproportion of possibility and necessity--the two elements of the self, in such a way that possibility is sacrificed to necessity. Thus the self loses its integrity. This results from the self's loss of the "inward direction which is the path he ought to have followed in order to become truly a self."[5]

In the second basic form of despair which is defiant despair, the disproportion is one in which possibility absorbs necessity and thereby finitude is lost in a fantastic striving after infinity. The self seeks to affirm itself as possibility alone, as a radical unconditional freedom. Such a self becomes, says Kierkegaard, "a hypothetical self."[6]

[1] Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, Anchor Books, p. 211.

[2] Ibid., p. 182.

[3] Ibid., p. 200.

[4] Ibid., p. 175.

[5] Ibid., p. 189.

[6] Ibid., p. 203.

It has no actuality or concretion. It becomes a castle which blows in the air of possibilities. Religiously understood this defiant despair is a rebellion against God. Neglecting power through which the self has its being, it tries to be the cause of itself.

From this study of Kierkegaardian despair, it is found that despair is a phenomenon of existence which must be accepted before it can be overcome. In Either/Or Kierkegaard speaks of 'choosing despair', for only then does one genuinely become aware of the estranged character of human existence. A flight from despair constitutes a flight from existence itself. Despair cannot be removed as a condition of existence, but it can be faced courageously. Despair is overcome only by going through it, not by avoiding it. "It is despair which forces a man to turn inwards: it is despair which compels a self-clarification a man would not otherwise make; and it is despair which gives inwardness its passion and desperate intent, for a man must defeat despair or perish."[1]

Guilt and sin. Guilt is another most basic human experience to which Kierkegaard has given careful attention. He has described guilt as "the most concrete expression of existence."[2] Guilt is a reflexive phenomenon which brings the self back to itself, making it aware of a discontinuity in its innermost experience. "The concept of guilt and sin," writes Kierkegaard, "posits precisely the single individual as the single individual."[3]

Guilt can otherwise be defined as an estrangement of self from

[1]Price, Narrow Pass, p. 125.

[2]Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 470.

[3]Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 88.

itself as possibility-of-being, or guilt, when understood theologically in which case it becomes sin, is an existential self-understanding of a man who apprehends himself as qualified by estrangement from God. In fact, sin is a misuse of man's distinctive capacity for free will. Its root is in his pride which makes revolt against his finite limitations and seeks to assert himself against God.

Kierkegaard has formulated the distinction between religiousness A and religiousness B. Guilt properly understood is a determinant of religiousness A, the religion of immanence; sin is a determinant of religiousness B, or the 'paradoxical religiousness'. In dealing with the phenomenon of guilt Kierkegaard is dealing with self as a 'human self'. Consciousness of sin is a qualification of the self as 'theological self'.

Authenticity. Kierkegaard regarded his task chiefly as to be "spy in the service of the highest."[1] He simply points out the perpetual discrepancy between word and deed; deed and proclaimed faith. All that is important for him is simple honesty. Bad-faith or unauthenticity which has now become a technical term in professional existentialist thought, has its root with Kierkegaard's detection of a profound and almost ineradicable inner hypocrisy in man.

For Kierkegaard, the self exists unauthentically because it has not yet earnestly and passionately chosen itself in its concrete existence. Authenticity is made possible only through resolute choice. The self exists authentically when it becomes free to make decisive choice and to shoulder its responsibility. A man, who is identical with his

[1] Journals of Kierkegaard, Entry No. 791, p. 251.

self, the self which he has made by his free and responsible choices, may be called to live authentically.

The aestheticist in Kierkegaard's doctrine of the 'stages' personifies the unauthentic mode of existence. He exists unauthentically because he is unable to make a choice and thus fails to apprehend himself in his unique, historical freedom. The ethical man, on the other hand, personifies the authentic mode. Because to exist ethically is to exist in full awareness of one's freedom and to choose one's self within the conditions of this freedom. Only the authentic man really is what he is, because in his case it is true that who he is has made him what he is rather than the other way around.

The authentically existing individual will always be infinitely interested in himself and in the realization of his destiny. This infinite interest Kierkegaard calls the passion of human freedom. This passion forces the individual to make a decisive choice, but a choice which always involves the possibility of risk. Decision to become himself and the consciousness of sin open the way toward authentic existence.

Despair in Sartre. Despair occupies quite an important place in Sartre's atheistic existentialism. In fact, it is the result of his atheism. In analysing the word 'abandonment' or 'forlornness' in his lecture on 'existentialism', Sartre says: "As for 'despair' the meaning of this expression is extremely simple. It merely means that we limit ourselves to a reliance upon that which is within our wills, or within the sum of the probabilities which render our action feasible."[1]

[1] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 39.

In the light of Kierkegaard, Sartrean form of despair can be described as defiant despair, the despair of willing despairingly to be oneself. What Kierkegaard has said under the heading of defiant despair applies very properly to Sartre. "So the despairing self is constantly building nothing but castles in the air, it fights only in the air . . . The self wants to enjoy the entire satisfaction of making itself into itself, of developing itself, of being itself; . . . And yet in the last resort it is a riddle how it understands itself; just at the instant when it seems to be nearest to having the fabric finished it can arbitrarily resolve the whole thing into nothing."[1]

The Sartrean self--by projecting to avoid freedom, to be in-itself, to be God--"wants to enjoy the entire satisfaction of making itself into itself." But as for Sartre God is impossible, untimately this projection is doomed to frustration bringing forth the unlimited despair. Sartre's attempt to place man to the status of God, by giving him unlimited, absolute freedom, is the mark of defiant despair, 'the sickness unto death'. This sickness cannot be cured as long as God in his philosophy is supposed, absurdly, to be not existent.

In the Sartrean conception of man and his world despair is inevitable. Sartre did not discover, as Kierkegaard did, that despair, though it is not existence, is an essential possibility looking towards existence. Sartrean man suffers from despair, but does not choose despair freely, as does the Kierkegaardian individual, to overcome it. In his plays and novels we see the variations on this single theme: man is a useless passion; he is superfluous in the world. The characteristic of

[1]Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, Anchor Books, p. 203.

Sartrean free man is that he knows this fact but nevertheless goes ahead with his life defiantly. As the Sartrean man cannot overcome despair throughout his life, this may be taken to mean that Sartre gets no further than the aesthetic level of existence.

But this is not to dismiss Sartre lightly. Sartre well knows the ultimate futility of his project--to be God. Sartre's argument here is self-defeating. Just as in discussing 'bad-faith' he says that the very fact of man's trying to escape freedom implies his knowledge of freedom; so here we may say that at the bottom of Sartre's vehement denial of God's existence there is the implication that he is keenly conscious of God. His form of despair, his radical gesture of defiance is both the deepest alienation from God and at the same time the nearest salvation.

Guilt. According to Sartre who also recognizes the presence of guilt in the human condition, the complete freedom with its consequent full responsibility is not an easy thing to bear. For it brings with it the tormenting affliction of guilt.

Generally, for Sartre, guilt is the refusal to face anguish which the recognition of our absolute freedom brings to us. Man is guilty when, instead of recognizing that he spends his life pursuing and making his self, he pretends that he is born with a determined self. But, according to Sartre, there is no getting away from one's responsibility. It is part of the nature of things, a necessary consequence of man's free being. Yet 'self-deception' or 'bad-faith' is a very common thing. As many of Kierkegaardian man live their whole lives aesthetically without recognizing their freedom, so many of Sartrean people live their whole lives in self-deception, in bad-faith.

Though Sartre denounces his existentialism as atheistic, he surely uses a variation of the doctrine of original sin in his philosophy and says that "My original Fall is the existence of the Other."[1] Original sin, for Sartre, is "my upsurge in a world where there are others," and his opinion is that "whatever may be further relations with others, these relations will be only variations of the original theme of my guilt."[2]

Man can never be an object to himself, but he is made an object for others. And in Sartre's opinion, "It is before the Other that I am guilty. I am guilty first when beneath the Other's look I experience my alienation and my nakedness as a fall from grace which I must assume. This is the meaning of the famous line from Scripture: 'They knew that they were naked.'"[3] Thus it is clear that in addition to his notion of guilt, Sartre recognizes a variation of the doctrine of original sin which fits oddly in his atheistic philosophy.

Authenticity. Sartre follows closely Kierkegaard's central insight that the authentic life is the life of resolute choice and commitment. One of the outstanding characteristics of the authentic man is that he is a man of action. It is only by acting according to his choice that he can know the effect of his choice. Yet the self can never achieve a satisfactory justification for its actions. The self is inadequate and can never achieve the desired perfection. Though

[1] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 263.

[2] Ibid., p. 410.

[3] Loc.cit.

the word 'authenticity' for Sartre designates the moral ideal, yet throughout his critical method we mostly know what authenticity is not.

Thus although in his writings there is the implication that authenticity is achieved when man emancipates himself from the 'bad-faith', yet for the most part his reflection on this subject remains undeveloped and consequently it never becomes clear what Sartre means by authenticity and to what extent it is possible in his pessimistic view of life.

Freedom for Sartre, as was for Kierkegaard, is the foundation for any possible authentic selfhood. We hope in his promised treatise on ethics, Sartre shall be able to present this ideal more precisely and more positively, which he has not yet succeeded.

CHAPTER VII

CONCEPT OF TIME

In Kierkegaard. The philosophy of human finitude introduced by existentialism receives its special character through its distinctive understanding of time. The existentialist interpretation of time, as immediately experienced by the existing subject, has placed into question the traditional understanding of time. At the very basis of existentialist objection is the conviction that time is ontologically falsified if it is understood as an infinite, quantitative, objective succession of instantaneous 'nows'.

In his reflections on time, Kierkegaard has expressed that this traditional view of time, however legitimate application it may have in the abstracted and objective world of science, cannot characterize man's immediate experience of lived time. Commonly we view of time as a process of going-by. But this is not the particular time which the self experiences in its concrete immediacy.

When we define time, says Kierkegaard, "it seems plausible to define it also as the present, the past and the future. However this distinction is incorrect."[1] He further says that "For abstract thinking time and space are absolutely identical . . . and they become so for visual representation."[2] But the time of human concern is not an

[1] Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 76.

[2] Ibid., p. 77n.

abstractly visualized and spacialized time. Human time is time experienced concretely in the subjective reflections of the existing individual.

The self as consciousness permeated with passion is understood by Kierkegaard as a structural synthesis of possibility and necessity which is rooted respectively in the temporal moments of future and past. Consciousness of being a self involves arriving from a past and moving into a future.

Kierkegaardian view of time seems to grant a priority to the future when he writes, ". . . in a certain sense the future signifies more than the present and the past; for the future is in a sense the whole of which the past is a part, and in a sense future may signify the whole."[1] His emphasis on future is due to the fact that by his religious attitude he understands that "the eternal means first of all the future."[2]

The significance of the 'instant' or 'moment' in Kierkegaard's religious existentialism is noteworthy. It is in the moment that the individual unifies and integrates himself in the act of choosing and it is in the moment that the eternal transfigures time. Throughout the whole of Kierkegaard's writings the moment has this twofold ethico-religious meaning. The moment is the time for decision. The various significance of the moment is for Kierkegaard ultimately grounded in the religious confrontation of eternity in time. The moment becomes the occasion for God's action in time and history. "The instant is that ambiguous moment in which time and eternity touch one another, thereby positing the temporal, where time is constantly intersecting

[1] Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 80.

[2] Loc. cit.

eternity and eternity constantly permeating time."[1]

Considering the relation of moment both to time and eternity, Kierkegaard has sought to elucidate the meaning of it as the "Fullness of Time."[2] In its relation to time it is that which binds together the past and the future, making possible a unification of the structures of selfhood. In its relation to eternity the moment is understood as an existential presence qualified by an eternal meaning.

Sartre's conception of time. Kierkegaard's continuing argument against the objectification of time has become a distinctive characteristic of Sartre's existentialism. Time, for Sartre, as it was for Kierkegaard, is an ekstatic unity in which future, past and present are apprehended as inseparable phases of human existence. Or, as Sartre has expressed it, they are "structured moments of an original synthesis."[3]

Sartre is at one with Kierkegaard in holding the view that, the immediately experienced time of human concern must be clearly and consistently differentiated from an abstract, quantitative measured time which has to be objectively spatialized in order to be known. For Sartre, "The only possible method by which to study temporality is to approach it as a totality which dominates its secondary structures and which confers on them their meaning."[4]

In the theory of human time developed in Being and Nothingness,

[1] Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 80.

[2] Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, p. 13.

[3] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 107.

[4] Loc. cit.

Sartre deals with time in relation to the projects of human being. Man cannot be conceived as a being in time in the sense of an object continuing in time without losing its self-identity. Properly speaking man exists as time, temporalizing himself as past, present and future. The structures of human concern are temporal moments. Man's relation to himself, to others, and to the environmental world is always in some sense temporalized.

The future, according to Sartre, is the continual possibilization of possibles. On the point of the priority of future Sartre disagrees with Kierkegaard and argues that: "No one of these dimensions has any ontological priority over the other; none of them can exist without the other two. Yet in spite of all this, it is best to put accent on the present ekstasis and not on the future ekstasis."[1] But to give emphasis to the present is to fall back into a common view of time which tends to dissolve all reality into a present.

In Sartrean conception of time also there is emphasis on the significance of the 'moment'. It is in the moment that spirit is apprehended to create itself in the presence of other spirits. As because the nature of this other spirits remain essentially incomprehensible, each man apprehends himself as an anguished sinner in respect of this other spirit.

Sartre however differs from Kierkegaard about the nature of this other spirit. Kierkegaard declares God to be the other spirit significantly present in immediate awareness, and all men are defined as sinners in relation to God. Sartre, on the other hand, asserts man alone to be

[1] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 142.

present at this 'other'; and each man is then seen as a sinner in relation to other men. For the reason of this difference in the nature of other spirit, Sartrean moment does not represent the promise of eternity, as it does for Kierkegaard.

CHAPTER VIII

ETHICS AND MORALITY

In this chapter my task is to give an account of Kierkegaard's and Sartre's views about ethical theory, to judge whether for Kierkegaard a science of ethics is possible and how far Sartre is successful in presenting his ethical views without yet having published his promised treatise on ethics.

Kierkegaard's ethical ideas. As far as Kierkegaard is concerned, the problem arises from the fact that he, nowhere in his writings, fully states his views about ethical theory. He rather, for the most part, suggests it and allows the reader to develop the exposition of it. From the beginning he has no interest in traditional ethical problems. His point is that no system of ethics ever justifies the choice of the good to a disinterested, detached observer. In disinterestedness a man finds only theories about ethical decisions and never makes an ethical decision.

In The Concept of Dread, Kierkegaard points out that ethics is an ideal science, but maintains that it is different from all other ideal sciences. "Ethics is after all an ideal science, and that not only in the sense that every other science is ideal. Ethics would bring ideality into reality; on the other hand its moment is not designed to raise reality up into ideality. Ethics points to ideality as a task and assumes that man is in possession of the conditions requisite for performing

it. Thereby ethics develops a contradiction, precisely for the fact that it makes the difficulty and the impossibility clear."[1]

Kierkegaard's attack is leveled sharply against all abstract ethical discussions. He believed that a theory about the nature of ethical decisions could be true, but also sought to show that such a theory did not replace an act of evaluating in the thinker. So G. Price says, "We shall see him therefore trying to find a new basis for ethics--and yet, paradoxically, at the same time trying to transcend ethics in every direction. We shall see him establishing his new basis not upon any religious dogma nor upon some traditional schedule of right and wrong but--as did Kant before him--within the nature of man himself (especially within man as a self-creating being driven inexorably by the imperative to be), and thereafter interpreting and reconstructing ethics in the light of it."[2]

Kierkegaardian values are not so much concerned with what should be chosen as how the choice should be made. They are not virtues or kinds of act, but rather ways of acting that pervade all the so-called virtues. And, "The real action," for him, "is not the external act, but an internal decision in which the individual puts an end to the mere possibility and identifies himself with the content of his thought in order to exist in it. This is the action."[3] Philosophy, according to Kierkegaard, is not made for super-man to contemplate, but for man to live by. But the life of man is the area of ethical enquiry. "... . the

[1]Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 15.

[2]Price, Narrow Pass, pp. 149-150.

[3]Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 302.

more simple philosophy which is propounded by an existing individual for existing individuals, will more especially emphasize the ethical."[1]

When Kierkegaard declares in The Postscript that "Ethically regarded, reality is higher than possibility,"[2] he means that from the ethical, existential or moral standpoint, that which is existent, real and actual is of greater significance than that which is merely ideal or possible. For him, there is nothing moral about being able to talk about morality as a possibility. But the main factor is to concretely actualize the possibility and become a moral man, however way 'moral' is defined. The ethical has to do with the concerns and interests of the subject's existence and thus is in opposition to all attempts to merely contemplate man in general. For Kierkegaard, " . . . there is only one kind of ethical contemplation, namely, self-contemplation."[3]

Hence it may be affirmed that ethics for Kierkegaard, whether considered descriptively or normatively, must always centre about the individual. It is the individual and not mankind who receives the imperative (a self-imposed imperative, an existential imperative) to exist ethically. The ethical demand can only be actualized by each individual who alone knows what it is that 'moves within him'.

"Ethics concentrates upon the individual, and ethically it is the task of every individual to become an entire man; just as it is the ethical presupposition that every man is born in such a condition that he can become one. Whether anyone realizes this task or not makes no

[1] Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 110.

[2] Ibid., p. 284.

[3] Loc. cit.

difference, the fact that the requirement is there is the important thing. And if ever so many blind and mediocre and cowardly individuals renounce their own selves in order to become something en masse with the help of the generative process, Ethics does not," according to Kierkegaard, "bargain with them."[1]

In his writings we find Kierkegaard constantly protests against 'the general'. He states clearly that if he is said to have any ethical importance that is from the side of 'the individual'. "With the category of 'the individual' is bound up any ethical importance I may have."[2] According to him, it is necessary "to oppose boldly the immoral confusion which, philosophically and socially, tends to demoralize 'the individual' by means of 'mankind' or a fantastical notion of society; a confusion which proposes to teach ungodly contempt for that which is the prime condition of religiousness, namely, to be a single individual man."[3]

He further writes in his Journal, "And ethically, as is shown elsewhere, originality means to stake everything, to risk everything. First the kingdom of God."[4] That is, in order to start ethics, we will have to start from the individual and renounce the world, the universal. In consideration to such views, it may be said that Kierkegaard does not have any social ethics or ethics for the collectivity at all, although he does not deny it.

But Kierkegaard's emphasis on the individual does not mean that

[1] Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 309.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Point of View for My Work as an Author, p. 129.

[3] Ibid., pp. 126-127.

[4] The Journals of Kierkegaard, Entry 1372, p. 532.

he denies the world of ethics and the value of the general moral laws. He knows this law is good, and that what is asked of man is to interiorize it through consciousness and thus to make individuality coincide with the general. "This shows that the individual is at once the universal and the particular. Duty is the universal which is required of me; so if I am not the universal, I am unable to perform duty. On the other hand, my duty is the particular, something for me alone, and yet it is duty and hence the universal. Here personality is displayed in its highest validity. It is not lawless, neither does it make laws for itself, for the definition of duty holds good, but personality reveals itself as the unity of the universal and the particular."[1]

Here we find Kierkegaard to give the universe its due. Yet he certainly does not present a doctrinally articulated moral philosophy. His problem is certainly different and much more subtle. It is the problem of the individual decision, in a particular situation, by which a man elects to be an exception, to be an individual.

Here I intend to discuss the main theme of Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling, where confronted Abraham's willingness to kill his son, which is immoral and yet justified, Kierkegaard asks: "Is there such a thing as a teleogical suspension of the ethical?"[2] Can the ethical ever be suspended for the sake of a higher purpose, even the most sublime? Here the discovery of a paradox, "That the individual as the individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute,"[3] helps him to find a

[1]Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol.II, p. 268.

[2]Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, Anchor Books, p. 64.

[3]Ibid., p. 129.

satisfactory answer.

It is commonly assumed that Fear and Trembling is a dialectical analysis of Kierkegaard's own love-tragedy and the spiritual crisis in which it involved him. The Abraham-Isaac story here shows the transition from the ethical stage to the religious stage and it is here that Kierkegaard exemplifies his principle that 'the individual is higher than the universal'.

The individual Abraham does not, under the pressure of universally valid imperative, resigns himself to the offering up of his son, and thus gets satisfaction. On the contrary, as Abraham believes God, he is ready to murder his son, although he does not surrender even his temporal hopes. Abraham is never more individually himself than in the miracle and passion of faith.[1] The whole story as Kierkegaard reads it, turns upon this intensely individual relationship between the man Abraham and his Absolute Lord.

Abraham's relation to Isaac, ethically speaking is quite simply expressed by saying that a father shall love his son more dearly than himself. But "With Abraham the situation was different. By his act he overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher telos outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former."[2] The result of Abraham's situation is that the exceptional individual, condemned by the human community, the possibly guilty one who has risked everything for what he believed to be good, has no refuge but God. Certainly Kierkegaard here does not deny ethics, does not revolt against it, but

[1]Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, Anchor Books, p. 90.

[2]Ibid., p. 69.

simply passes beyond ethics. In this situation, according to Kierkegaard, the individual leaves behind him, without abolishing it certainly but transcending it, the world of ethics and he crosses the threshold of the world of faith.

At this stage "the ethical is reduced to a position of relativity,"[1] and itself constitutes temptation. "Whoever has had inwardness enough to lay hold of the ethical with infinite passion, and to understand the eternal validity of duty and the universal, for him there can neither in heaven or on earth or in hell be found so fearful a plight, as when he faces a collision where the ethical becomes the temptation."[2] For really from this moment on there is only one absolute rule and obligation, that which deals with one's direct connection with the ultimate end itself.

It is Kierkegaard's view that awareness of one's own existence becomes most acute in periods of extreme inner tension, when anxiety and dread, brings man face to face with some higher reality. It is his contention that only by passing through the dark nights of decision can one fully know what it means to be or not to be.

Ethics judges Abraham to be a murderer; religion pronounces him a 'knight of faith'. Thus the implication is drawn that Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical involves a contradiction between the domain of ethics and that of religion. But this implication, according to C. O. Schrag, is the result of some misinterpretation..

Schrag suggests that to avoid possible misinterpretation of

[1]Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, Anchor Books, p. 80.

[2]Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 231.

Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical, it is necessary to understand the distinction between the ethical 'as a universal moral requirement' and the ethical 'as a manner or mode of existence'.[1] In Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard is dealing primarily with the ethical as a universal moral requirement. The ethical in this sense deals with the universal norms and principles which are accepted by a group and sets forth as directives for moral action. As for example, it is a universal requirement that a father shall love his son more dearly than himself. In some other works of Kierkegaard, according to Schrag, the ethical is understood not as a universal moral requirement but as a mode of existence. And as a mode of existence, the ethical pertains to man's passionate and resolute choices. In Either/Or Kierkegaard writes, "The act of choosing is essentially a proper and stringent expression of the ethical."[2]

Schrag's point is that the ethical as a mode of existence is in no way contradicted or suspended by the religious act of faith. Indeed Abraham's intention to sacrifice Isaac, in so far as it involved a decision made in passion, earnestness and inwardness, was a most emphatic expression of the ethical as a mode of existence. And this Kierkegaard expresses clearly in this statement: " . . . the religious sphere, lies so close to the ethical that they are in constant communication with one another."[3] If there is any suspension in Abraham's faith, it is the suspension of a moral requirement which acts

[1]Calvin O. Schrag, "Notes on Kierkegaard's Teleological Suspension of the Ethical", Ethics, Vol. 70 (1959-60), p. 66.

[2]Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, p. 170.

[3]Kierkegaard, Postscript, pp. 144-145.

as a universal and subordinates the individual to its general moral sanction. Kierkegaard's continuing argument in Fear and Trembling is that the individual is superior to the universal; and here lies the paradox of religiousness.

In all this, of course, Kierkegaard is challenging the Hegelian system in which the Absolute was mediated to the individual through the universal. On account of the conflict between duty and will, Hegel is unable to consider morality, the sphere of the subjective disposition, supreme. He thinks that he knows a higher sphere wherein legality and morality become one and that is 'social morality'.

But for Kierkegaard, in the order of reality, as distinct from the order of thought, it is the individual and the individual alone that is real. This does not as such deny the validity of the universal or the validity of thought, but it demands that the universal be understood and appropriated concretely. Ultimately knowledge for Kierkegaard becomes knowledge through appropriation. The concrete individual is the foundation of the universal; and the universal has validity only in so far as it emerges from the concrete encounters of the existing individual.

There is here a line of thought that sees the authority of duty as somehow derived from, or illuminated by the fact that it is God's command or will for us. In Abraham's story as offered by Kierkegaard, Abraham found his offering up his son as his duty towards God. This position is one that could be maintained only if it were true that we have a properly moral awareness of a duty to obey God and no other moral awareness whatsoever. By his words--"But what then is duty? Duty is precisely the expression for God's will"[1]--Kierkegaard seems to separate

[1] Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, Anchor Books, p. 70.

duty from morality as if duty itself is not an ethical term. Although it is true that in this Kierkegaardian sense of duty Abraham is not going against duty; but this cannot face all objections.

One defect of Kierkegaard's understanding of Abraham story is that he does not take into consideration the fact that with the problems of the decision of faith there is the problem of the hearing itself. Who is it whose voice one hears? On this ground Sartre object to Kierkegaardian interpretation of Abraham story. "If an angel appears to me, what is the proof that it is an angel; or, if I hear voices, who can prove that they proceed from heaven and not from hell, or from my own subconsciousness or some pathological condition? Who can prove that they are really addressed to me?"[1] For Kierkegaard it is self-evident because of the Christian tradition in which he grew up that he who demands the sacrifice is none other than God. But for an atheist like Sartre it is not self-evident without further question.

Kierkegaard's ethical views, as we find in Abraham-Isaac story, put morality on its guard not only against Hegel but also against Kant, although it was Kant whose influence forced Kierkegaard to seek an outlet for the deepest longings of the moral consciousness in a revolt against the generality of the law. Kierkegaard's desperate insistence on the importance of the individual struck a moral blow against Kantian formalism.

In the Kantian doctrine of the categorical imperative, the individual is not only required to obey a general law but, in addition, it is uniquely through reverence for the general law that he must be

[1]Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 31.

motivated. Morality is a generality or logical universality itself, the abstract possibility of universalizing the maxim of individual's action, which constitutes all the force of the moral commandment. If according to Kantian theory of autonomy, the noumenal 'I' is the author of the law which the empirical 'I' obeys, this noumenal 'I' is itself universal, being the supra-temporal general will. Kantian ethics empties the individual of itself, reduces itself to making of itself a pure abstract point in face of the abstract universal which is the law.

Hegelian ethics, on the other hand, will give the individual back to itself only in so far as the individual will voluntarily obey the state, the objectified universal will of the Spirit. The individual should identify itself with the concrete universal in which it is reunited with its own being and substance.

It is against these two kinds of ethics that the Kierkegaardian individuality cries vengeance. "The conclusions of Kant, Fichte and Hegel revolted him: they were too abstract to honour the fact of individuality in its finite and awkwardly human content."[1] "With Kant he sees ethics as arising from man himself. With Schleiermacher and Hegel, he sees it as a personal stand, a mood, a deep concern with what one's own person should become. His quarrel with them was not about the validity of their goal (the ideal enlargement of personality) but about their plans for achieving it."[2]

"He found an answer to Kant's question in an imperative more primitive than Kant's . . . --an imperative which arose from the ground

[1]Price, Narrow Pass, p. 151.

[2]Ibid., p. 155.

of human existence and which posited a duty beyond all duties. The question was not whether a man should obey it or not, for obey he must. The only question was how to obey it rightly, and wehther he would do the right thing."[1]

And the right thing is, according to Kierkegaard, to be yourself. "In place of the categorical imperative, in place of all humanistic alternatives, he sets the existential imperative. . . To be or not to be--that is the question"[2] for him as it was for Hamlet.

Thus we find Kierkegaard always at pains to show that ethical demands are so absolute that no moral can be perfect enough to fulfill them, that they only make us profoundly aware of the fact that we are sinners. According to him, ethics has the utility to achieve full awareness of our state, of the fact that we are sinners. To understand ethics, we have to approach it from within and apply the subjective method; and this subjective approach reveals that the moral law is absolute and not relative. Morality can only be absolute because it is so deeply ingrained in man that it must be considered as a characteristic of his true nature.

"Moral conventions are necessarily relative, but what is not relative is the existential imperative which makes a man take himself seriously and which posits the self-responsibility which applies equally to all men everywhere as an absolute to which there are no exceptions."[3]

What we can figure out from this discussion of Kierkegaard's ethical views is that the fact of being face to face with God is at the heart

[1] Price, Narrow Pass, p. 155.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Ibid., p. 178.

of all moral life and of every authentically moral decision; that the more the moral experience deepen and become genuine, the more they are interiorized and thereby become free from the slavish conformity to the universal law.

Sartre's ethical ideas. The study of values in Sartre's philosophy must necessarily be inadequate because Sartre's expected work on ethics has not yet been published. Here my attempt is to present his ethical views as have been expressed in his philosophical and literary works.

Though Sartre declares himself an existentialist, by which we generally mean the propounder of the individual; we do not find in him, as we find in Kierkegaard, an indifferent attitude toward social ethics. Rather with the publication of his book Critique of Dialectical Reason in 1960, we notice his interest in social philosophy. About this book Mary Warnock comments that, "It is a deliberate rejection of the individual."[1]

It was at the time when he was involved in the political activities that Sartre became aware of the necessity of insisting on his thoughts' ethical implications. Sartre's personal experience during the war played a decisive role in the elaboration of his philosophical and ethical thought. According to him, engaging oneself in political action is synonymous with throwing oneself into the world, and it is in throwing himself into the world that man makes himself. The whole moral effort of man seems finally to identify itself with the revolutionary effort and political emancipation. Thus the moral concern in Sartrean

[1] M. Warnock, The Philosophy of Sartre. (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1965), p. 135.

existentialism turns most often to the political one.

Although he has promised to produce a treatise on ethics, it is doubtful whether he would be able to do so. What he presents in his philosophy is an ontological description of human reality, and the passage from an ontological description of human reality to an ethical theory, from 'is' to 'ought' is obviously risky.

As Sartre's ethical views are connected with his political involvement, in my attempt to estimate his ethical position I must take a brief look on his political views. Sartre's attack is directed against a bourgeois morality which seeks salvation by a set of rules and principles. "He hated the 'analytical' intellectuals, all those who have ever on the tips of their tongues the principles of democracy, equality and brotherhood, as if to profess were to practice."[1] It is on this opposition to the bourgeoisie and to the soulless abstraction of its ideology that Sartre's relation with communism finds its origin.

Sartre cannot seem to make up his mind exactly where he stands in relation to communism. Though in his theory, Sartre accepts some of the Marxist concepts--namely, the idea that the social classes exist, that at least some of them are the product of the economic system; that man will not have true political freedom so long as class distinction remains and that the dominant ideas and values of a period are the ideas and values of the dominant class--nevertheless the differences between Sartre's concept of social class and the Marxist concept are profound.

Society is characterized by conflict; but this conflict, for

[1]W. Desan, Marxism of J.-P. Sartre, pp. 2-3.

Sartre, is mainly between individuals. For Marx, human nature can only be understood in terms of the social environment. But to this Sartre adds that the social or universal is the human condition with its characteristics of individual freedom and responsibility. Man cannot help but struggle against man, for the nature of the present world imposes the necessity of struggle upon him. But human violence is comprehensible, Sartre insists, because it is merely the product of what he calls 'interiorized scarcity'.

Sartre maintains that contemporary Marxism is wrong and is in danger of becoming an empty and abstract scholastic system incapable of understanding the true nature of historical events; and suggests that it needs a strong assistance with existentialism, the philosophy which with its recognition of the role played by the personal involvement of the existing individual and because of its concernment with immediate problems can restore Marxism to a better state where it can understand and explain how men act, plan and struggle in particular situations. Sartre gives emphasis to the problem of alienation and finds the cure of alienation in the recognition of freedom.

What we must study, Sartre believes, are the motives for which people come together, the 'praxis' of each particular group, and the exact nature of the relationship which it establishes with other groups. Sartre strongly objects to any universal and abstract norms of ethics. Value itself is presented as that toward which my 'praxis' tends.

Now, what leads Sartre to reject ethical norms? According to him, morality is something creative. Each man must invent his own values, must create his own ethic. In this sense, Sartre thinks,

morality is comparable to aesthetic creativity. "There is this in common between art and morality, that in both we have to do with creation and invention."[1] When an artist begins painting it is silly to judge it in advance by *à priori* norms, whether it turns out well or ill depends on whether the result adequately expresses the artist's intention. Similarly, "we cannot decide *à priori* what it is that should be done . . . Man makes himself; he is not found ready-made; he makes himself by the choice of his morality, and he cannot but choose a morality, such is the pressure of circumstances upon him."[2]

Sartre lays on religion the blame for propounding the rigid theoretical notion of an immutable good. He sees in Christianity and Cartesianism a doctrine that imposes a ready-made notion of goodness which does not leave the chance for the man to create their own good. But according to Sartre, no one can decide for others what is good for them.

In his lecture on 'Existentialism', Sartre expresses some of his views on morality. It is the mind of man, he thinks, which creates values. The values are products of the 'nothingness' of the human existence and there is no value that can have ontological validity unless chosen by a human consciousness. A value has no existence in itself. Any value receives actuality in the person who acts upon it, having first created it by his choice.

The metaphysical background of Sartre's fundamental ethical theme is that God does not exist. And if there is no God, there is nothing

[1] Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 49.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

within or outside of man to depend upon. "For if indeed existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no determinism--man is free, man is freedom. Nor, on the other hand, if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimate our behaviour. Thus we have neither behind us, nor before us in luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse. We are left alone, without excuse."[1]

Sartre furthermore claims that even if there were a God and even if general norms were written in heaven they would not be of much use to man. For even in that case man would not be dispensed from the duty to explain the heavenly signs and to give them a meaning. Sartre ends the example of his student, who came to him for advice whether he should go to war or should stay home with his helpless mother, by saying that there is no system of general moral norms which can reply to this question. What should be done in a particular situation cannot be decided beforehand. " . . . to whatever ethical system he might appeal, the Kantian or any other, he could find no sort of guidance whatever; he was obliged to invent the law for himself."[2] Therefore, in Sartre's opinion, even if there were general norms, they would be wholly useless.

The most important conclusion that Sartre draws from his atheism seems to be this: since God does not exist,man's freedom is absolute and he can never escape it. There is no God to prescribe his essence

[1]Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 34.

[2]Ibid., p. 49.

and what is more important there is no God to prescribe his values. No objective truth, no moral principle, no religious conviction, no intrinsic value exist apart from man's choosing to believe them. Man is responsible for his every experience, since the respective significance and interpretation of experiences is determined by the selection he makes. Man thus selects the manner of being he chooses to become. " . . . and when once a man has seen that values depend upon himself, in that state of forsakeness he can will only one thing, and that is freedom as the foundation of all values."[1]

Sartre's moral philosophy is mainly based on his doctrine of absolute freedom and its consequent full responsibility. The ethical conclusions that Sartre draws in Existentialism and Humanism are that though values are created by the choices of the individual man, what the individual chooses he chooses not just as good for him but as good in general, that is, as good for all men. In choosing the right way for himself he, as a matter of fact, chooses the right way for others. By our free acts we choose what kind of man we ourselves want to be and by implication, express a wish as to how we want other men to be. Nothing can be good for us without being good for everybody. Hence to choose for oneself is to choose for everybody.

This sounds very much like the Kantian ethical theory that one's act should be determined only by principles that one wills to be binding on all men. Beneath this superficial similarity, however, there are important philosophical differences. Kant was presumably formulating a moral rule, i.e., a prescription for the guidance of human conduct.

[1]Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 51.

Sartre's intention is not clear enough. He seems to be giving a description of the actual moral situation. If this be the case, he does not explain how the individual, in choosing himself, commits the whole human race.

Sartre merely states a fact, whatever we do implies a certain picture that we have of man as we want him to be; but we cannot say that the picture of man thus created by us, is morally either good or bad. According to Sartre's theory, we can never do wrong because there is no ideal standard of rightness or wrongness before we set up such a standard by our acts. Kant's categorical imperative, on the other hand, is not a statement of fact but a postulate.

Another characteristic of Sartre's ethical theory is that he shows an inclination towards extraordinary situations in which the moral values are determined outside the bounds of ordinary rules. In Kierkegaard also we find this preference for uncommon and extraordinary situations. But for Kierkegaard these extraordinary situations are not to determine moral values but to achieve some more higher values by surpassing moral values. In such an extreme situation Abraham understood the value of his individuality, the truth that the individual is higher than the universal. In ordinary human situation this type of fundamental choice is not possible. Most of the main characters of Sartre's plays and novels meet some extreme situations when they are forced by their absolute freedom to make the resolute choice. According to Sartre, no established rules can meet the extreme situations that men face in this present revolutionary stage.

In his dealings with concrete moral problems, Sartre seems to agree with Hume in that the worth of an act does always in a certain

sense depend on motive. "The motive," according to Sartre, "is generally considered as a subjective fact. It is the ensemble of the desires, emotions and passions which urge me to accomplish a certain act."[1]

In the example he gives of his student confronted by the twin duties of joining a fighting force or looking after an aged and helpless mother, he says: "In the end, it is feeling that counts."[2] The existing person, including his instincts and feelings really determines the norms he appeals to, and the kind of man he is impels him toward the kind of standards he sets up. But then, Sartre says, the question remains: "How does one estimate the strength of a feeling?"[3] There is no a priori standard to estimate the strength of one's feeling; and ultimately the person concerned is obliged to invent the law for himself.

In his theory of morality, Hume clearly draws the distinction between statements about what is the case and statements about what ought to be. Moralists, he says, have a tendency to pass from statements of facts to statements of what ought to be, as if they could infer the latter from the former. Here in Sartre we find this tendency. From his attempt to supply a systematic framework for the understanding of man and society as they in fact are, Sartre proceeds to draw the conclusion as they ought to be. But this is obviously fallacious. A statement about the nature of man and society as they are, in no way, contains an implication what they ought to be.

The operation to which Sartre proceeds is characterized by the turning of description into prescription, that is, simply to pass from fact to right, from is to ought. In Sartre's theory, everything is

[1] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 446.

[2] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 36.

[3] Ibid., p. 37.

permitted to me on condition that I permit it to myself by assuming deeply enough my responsibilities, through a choice.

The root of the trouble that produces the anomaly in Sartre's theory is that while he derives his concept of virtue from absolute freedom, which he believes is the constitution of human nature; he has found nothing absolute in Human nature from which he can derive this theory of absolute freedom and he, therefore, derives this arbitrarily and solely from his 'postulatory atheism', from his dogmatic assertion that God does not exist and therefore man must be absolutely free. What he does, in effect, is just to take the concept of God as creator of values and, as an atheist, to transfer it to men. " . . . if I have excluded God, the Father, there must be somebody to invent values."[1] But this is surely a misleading way of explaining the origin of values.

In Sartre's arbitrary ethical theory, where every choice is as good as the other, there is no place for responsibility. Nevertheless, we find in his theory, the responsibility of the man not only for himself, but for others and for the whole world. But his theory of responsibility totally fails because, according to him man is responsible only to himself and as there is no given morality, he can constantly change the principles on which he bases his actions.

Certainly, human individual cannot live in a perpetual state of merely 'being responsible'. Responsibility as such cannot have any meaning. To make sense, responsibility must be not only 'responsibility for' but also 'responsibility to'. And this 'responsibility to' leads towards a concept of the absolute which Sartre denies so vehemently. Morality cannot be arbitrarily created. It must have a relation to

[1] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 54.

something external to the individual. Thus our attempts to discover any definite answer in Sartre's ethics seem to result in further questioning.

The discussion of Kierkegaard's ethical theories, on the other hand, shows that Kierkegaard far from reducing the status of ethics, gives it the greatest possible significance If there is a teleological suspension of the ethical, it is because at a certain moment we pass the threshold and enter the presence of sovereign freedom, our ultimate end in person,--everything else is necessarily eclipsed. And though at this stage, "the ethical is reduced to a position of relativity. From this, however, it does not follow that the ethical is to be abolished, but it acquires an entirely different expression, the paradoxical expression--that, for example, love to God may cause the knight of faith to give his love to his neighbor the opposite expression to that which, ethically speaking, is required by duty."[1] Thus religious foundation does not make ethical relative, but paradoxically prevents it from degenerating into relativity. Dependence on the absolute, something higher than himself, sets man free.

> Freedom obviously means acting in complete agreement with one's innermost nature, without any compulsion foreign to it, and according to Kierkegaard, man's innermost nature is his ethical self. God s appeal to this self, therefore, does not constitute an external compulsion, but sets man free by enabling him to act according to his true nature, and just because the demand is absolute, it sets him absolutely free. These assertions, like all references to religion, are based on an act of faith and may sound unconvincing.[2]

[1] Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, Anchor Books, p. 80.

[2] P. Roubiczek, Existentialism: For and Against (Cambridge [Eng.] University Press, 1964), p. 65

Sartre's dependence on Kierkegaard. From the discussion of Kierkegaard's and Sartre's ethical theories, I can summarize some points common to both Kierkegaard and Sartre; and as Kierkegaard is the originator of these points, it may be assumed that Sartre has borrowed these ideas mainly from Kierkegaard, though he tries to lead them to atheistic direction.

The very beginning of Kierkegaard's philosophy judges impatiently all the objectives, dogmas and systems, and this in ethical ground leads him to ignore all general norms. Sartre, in fact, emphasizes this point more strongly and thus not only ignores the general norms but altogether denies them. Instead both Kierkegaard and Sartre are committed to freedom, to the open-ended character of individual human being. Sartre here goes further than Kierkegaard and in addition to the open-endedness of man, considers this factor in society. Kierkegaard's freedom is freedom for everything, for every action; but Sartre's freedom is freedom from everything, mainly from God. The non-existence of God is the first and foremost condition of Sartre's doctrine of absolute freedom.

Kierkegaard insists that action is the important thing; that thought and being must become one; that man must try to actualize what is within him as a possibility. On the basis of this formulation of Kierkegaard, Sartre later on could say: "Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is."[1]

Sartre, following Kierkegaard, stresses on ethical responsibility,

[1]Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 41.

involvement with life, engagement and commitment. According to Kierkegaard, man must suffer the result of his own choice. Man must be responsible for the choices he makes. And here also we find Sartre tries to surpass Kierkegaard and thus attempts to include, in addition to the individual responsibility, the responsibility for society, age, in fact for the whole world.

Almost alone among the observers of his time, Kierkegaard predicted that modern state-development would enslave man, that 'crowd' would enforce man into rigid conformities, thus leading the degradation of human personality. A century after Kierkegaard, Sartre has become conscious of the same fact. It was Kierkegaard who first opened Sartre's eyes and made him realize the dehumanization and mass-mindedness of modern man. He then follows the footsteps of Kierkegaard to expose the dangers of mass society with its threat to the free individual.

Both Kierkegaard and Sartre show some inclination toward uncommon and extraordinary situations--to tackle the problems of which are beyond the boundary of ordinary general rules, however strong and widely established these rules are. In such situations, the existing subject is forced by the inner nature, by freedom to make his own decisions, to choose his own values. But the difference between Kierkegaard and Sartre lies in the fact that in such a situation, Kierkegaard's individual, leaving general moral principles finds shelter in a God-relation; whereas Sartrean man is encouraged to deny God's existence and thereby to affirm the absolute freedom.

Kierkegaard's aim was to exalt 'the individual' in place of the 'crowd'. And in this transformation his method was to make the individual understand the value of self-realization and self-perfection. Though

Sartre does not recognize Kierkegaardian value of self-perfection, he realizes the full importance of individual's self-realization and in addition to this emphasizes the point of self-determination as the supreme goal of life, which is consistent with his atheism.

From this study I can now proceed to draw the conclusion that Sartre's ethical theory is not a new theory but only a foot-note to Kierkegaard's ethical ideas. In his attempt to add this foot-note, Sartre leads these ideas in another direction, to an atheistic direction which is just the opposite of Kierkegaard's intention.

The question I want to put here is: whether by adding this foot-note to Kierkegaard's ideas, Sartre is successful to overcome the difficulties that Kierkegaard's ideas are said to suffer; or merely have made them subject to more severe objections. To answer this question will be my attempt in the concluding part of the thesis.

CHAPTER IX

CONCEPTION OF GOD

In Kierkegaard. Behind all his writings, Kierkegaard had one aim in life--how to become a Christian. From the beginning God and Christianity became an indestructible reality for Kierkegaard by reason of the dominant influence of his religious-minded father. He was aware of his talent and religiousness and has mentioned in The Point of View, " . . . because I was conscious of being a religious author and as such was concerned with 'the individual' ('the individual'--in contrast to 'the public'), a thought in which is contained an entire philosophy of life and of the world."[1] According to him, "God does not think, He creates; God does not exist, He is eternal. Man thinks and exists."[2] The only reality which man faces is God.

Like Kant, Kierkegaard denies all the traditional proofs for the existence of God. He agrees with Kant in holding the view that the reality of God cannot be demonstrated by speculative reasoning. For him God does indeed exist. But to prove his existence is beyond reason or speculative philosophy. He is unknown; and according to him, it is altogether absurd to believe in God, to believe in an unknown something objectively.

[1]Kierkegaard, The Point of View of My Work as an Author, p. 21.

[2]Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 296.

Though the unknown cannot be proved to be existent, it cannot either be dismissed as non-existent, for even to do that would imply a knowledge of it. "For if God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it. For at the very outset, in beginning my proof, I will have presupposed it. . . . readily understanding that the whole would be impossible if he did not exist."[1]

Kierkegaard speaks not only as though proofs of God's existence could be found but also as though they would be irrelevant and indeed undesirable, even if they could be found. We are left with the leap of faith, the passionate appropriation by the individual of an 'objective uncertainty'.

Man is spirit. He is the only reality whose being depends upon avowing dependence on another reality. Spirit is not something in man like a reason. Spirit is responsibility in man for acknowledging God as his source. It is only a decisive faith in God which, according to Kierkegaard, enables the individual to face the crowd, the universal. The individual can become himself only before God. But the most difficult thing is to take oneself serious as an individual, which means an individual before God. And that particular task is the task of one's life, never finished, always in becoming, always in paradoxical trust in what isolates one's own deepest commonsense.

For Kierkegaard, "Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping

[1]Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragment, p. 31.

God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe."[1] If man has an eternal destiny, which Kierkegaard never doubted, then he has it as an individual before God, as an individual who counted to God. Man exists, in the true sense, only in a radical encounter with God.

In Sartre. Undoubtedly, Sartre is the most ardent representative of atheism among the adherents of existential philosophy. He is well-known in existential philosophy mainly because of his lucid atheism. His religious background was part Catholic and part Protestant. The religious influence in which he was raised up was not strong enough to make a lasting impression on his deeply meditative nature.

He is an atheist who understands man's thirst for God, and who teaches them that they must learn to live with their thirst for ever unsatisfied. According to him, God is an illusion, neither necessary nor justifiable. "There is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity."[2] For him the existence of God and human freedom cannot go together and he accuses the belief in God to be a means to avoid responsibility.

In contrast to Kierkegaard, Sartre sets himself defiantly to the task of giving dignity and meaning to life without God. For him, it is the very denial of God's existence, not the search for him that should be the existential philosopher's primary concern.

He presents several proofs for the non-existence of God; but, unfortunately, all these proofs are ungrounded and his position there is

[1]Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 182.

[2]Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 55.

dogmatic. Because non-existence of God, in fact, is a position from which he starts rather than one which he establishes critically. In this way, all his arguments against the existence of God involve the fallacy of '_petitio principii_'.

When all his arguments to deny the existence of God fail to do so, he at last recognizes that what he aims is not actually to disprove God's existence but to make man aware of his own existence. "Existentialism is not atheist in the sense that it would exhaust itself in demonstrations of the non-existence of God. It declares, rather, that even if God existed that would make no difference from its point of view."[1] Whether or not there is a God, Sartre's view here is that whatever God there be has not defined the concrete human conditions. There is no one who has settled for all man and for all times what the right solutions of their problems are.

Sartre is not justified in his atheistic assertion. All that he would be justified in concluding is that, since the world appears in human existential situation as contingent and since man cannot, as it were, escape this situation, he cannot know whether in fact the world is, or is not, due to the action of God. So when Sartre alters his stand and says, even if God did exist, that would not make any difference and man would still have to solve his own problems, his position seems to be more consistent than when he tries to argue from the non-existence of God to the non-existence of ethics.

[1] Sartre, _Existentialism and Humanism_, p. 56.

PART THREE

CONCLUSION

In this concluding part my attempt is to answer the question that I have posed at the end of Chapter VIII of the previous part. That is, by adding foot-note to Kierkegaard's ideas, has Sartre succeeded in overcoming the difficulties that Kierkegaard's ethics are said to suffer, or has he merely made the ideas more complicated and thereby more defective? In my attempt to answer this question I shall here comment upon both Kierkegaard's and Sartre's ethical views indicating the measure of my agreement with the Danish author.

Objections to Kierkegaard's ethics. Certainly, Kierkegaard's ethical ideas cannot be said to be perfect. The intrinsic merits of his ethical and philosophical ideas are still a subject for debate though their importance can no longer be denied. Many writers on Existentialism find fault with his extreme emphasis on individuality, and with his attempt to generalize his own experiences into his philosophy.

According to W. Kaufmann, "Kierkegaard's central error is epitomized by his two epigrams: 'the conclusions of passion are the only reliable ones' and 'what our age lacks is not reflection but passion'." Kaufmann holds that "this was not true in the 19th century, much less it is true today." At the end of this passage Kaufmann says: "Reason alone, to be sure, cannot solve some of life's most central problems. Does it follow that passion can, or that reason ought to be abandoned altogether?"[1]

Here, I think, Kaufmann has misunderstood Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard never tried to cut short the importance of reason. Throughout his works he tried to make man realize that reason cannot help the existing

[1] W. Kaufmann, Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre. (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1956), p. 18.

individual to understand the eternal and fundamental truth to which he is related. Reason may be helpful for drawing conclusions in the fields of logic and metaphysics, but in solving the concrete existential problems of the existing individual it can serve no purpose. In fact, not only reason but no other sources of knowledge can tell a man what is true for the individual in a particular situation. It is only by faith, by an act of will, that a man can decide the right path for himself. In denying reason as a method for solving 'life's most central problems', Kierkegaard does not abandon reason altogether. He has denied it only from one aspect, namely, from concrete existential aspect.

Kaufmann has brought some more charges against Kierkegaard in his book From Shakespeare to Existentialism. "He is fatally wrong when he minimizes or altogether ignores, the all-important difference between a thoughtful and a fanatical decision, between a choice that is responsible and one that is not; and what calls for censure above all else is his deliberate disparagement of critical scrutiny as blasphemy, impertinence and insubordination."[1]

In reply to this I would like to point out that nobody is justified in charging Kierkegaard with overlooking the crucial difference between responsible and irresponsible; 'a thoughtful and a fanatical decision'. In analysing the Abraham-Isaac story, he very well understood what would be the thoughtful and responsible decision for ordinary man in Abraham's situation--namely, to deny to sacrifice his son at the commandment because, ethically speaking, it is obvious and true that a father shall love his son more dearly than himself.

[1] W. Kaufman, From Shakespeare to Existentialism (Beacon Hill, Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 167-168.

But Kierkegaard has clarified the position by saying that "with Abraham the situation was different."[1] By his act he has overstepped the ethical (the stage which Kaufmann calls the 'thoughtful' and 'responsible') and has come into possession of a higher telos (which to common people seems to be 'fanatical' and irresponsible) outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former. Of course, he is responsible for that decision but responsible not to the world, to the universal, but to God, to the particular.

What Abraham did, he did by faith and faith is something that can neither be established nor driven away by argument. It is a miracle, a passion. And Kierkegaard writes, "the knight of faith . . . feels the pain of not being able to make himself intelligible to others, but he feels no vain desire to guide others. The pain is his assurance that he is in the right way."[2]

And this, I guess, to some extent meets Kaufmann's next charge against Kierkegaard that, unlike most religious people, "Kierkegaard's religiosity is unusually self-centred."[3] Religion is a matter of faith, a matter of belief which every man must achieve for himself and by himself. From the very outset, Kierkegaard is against those religious men who are very careful to observe all the outward religious formalities but lack sincerity and inwardness. They just follow the others in an objective way but never try to appropriate the truth themselves.

Kierkegaard writes, "The true knight of faith is a witness,

[1] Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, Anchor Books, p. 69.

[2] Ibid., p. 90.

[3] Kaufmann, From Shakespeare to Existentialism, p. 168.

never a teacher, and therein lies his deep humanity, which is worth a good deal more than this silly participation in others' weal and woe which is honoured by the name of sympathy, whereas in fact it is nothing but vanity."[1] Kierkegaard's religiousness is not to be seen by others, but to be lived by the self, by 'the individual'.

Arland Ussher, in his book on "Dread", has accused Kierkegaard of being essentially Hegelian. In his opinion, "Kierkegaard was a butterfly caught in youth in another scintillating, but to most people less attractive, thing, from which he was never completely to disengage himself: namely, the spider's web of Hegel's dislectic."[2] In another place he writes, "Kierkegaard, I repeat, remains entirely Hegelian in his way of thought. With him, as he once said, all is dialectical; guilt, despair, remorse, anguish--everything in his burdened and stricken life goes like a ballet."[3]

Against this opinion, I tend to think that, although Kierkegaard's philosophy arises as a revolt mainly against the Hegelian system, and although his philosophy is dialectical, to advance from this to the conclusion that Kierkegaard simply exists as a polemical against Hegel or that Kierkegaard remains entirely Hegelian, is simple nonsense. In his philosophy there is much more than his Hegelian and anti-Hegelian views. To be able to say that Kierkegaard is entirely Hegelian, one must completely disregard all that Kierkegaard ever said about the problems of logic, of the categories of thought, of truth, etc., in fact,

[1] Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, p. 90.

[2] Arland Ussher, Journey Through Dread (London: Darwen Finlayson Ltd., 1955), p. 37.

[3] Ibid., pp. 42-43.

his whole dialectic which he variously characterizes as 'existential', 'Greek' or 'qualitative' dialectic as opposed to Hegel's quantitative dialectic.

Kierkegaard takes as the starting point of his dialectic, not reality in general as Hegel does, but the individual reality of the thinker himself. In his dialectical presentation in Fear and Trembling he points against Hegelian ethics in which the absolute is mediated to the individual through the universal, and pursues his anti-Hegelian thesis that "the individual is higher than the universal."[1]

Though Hegel recognizes the initial point of becoming, finally, because of his rationalism, he was driven to formulate this movement in terms of a logical necessity; and there lies his difference from Kierkegaard. When Kierkegaard says that, "a becoming by necessity is simply a state of being,"[2] he obviously means the becoming of which Hegel speaks. In contrast to Hegel, Kierkegaard places the movement within man's existential freedom and not within a timeless system of logic. He finds movement to be disclosed and apprehended in the self's actualization through historical decision.

Kierkegaard admits that there may be much more for him to learn from Hegel's logic. Still he is proud, fearless and even defiant to insist his thesis that, "the Hegelian philosophy, by failing to define its relation to the existing individual, and by ignoring the ethical, confounds existence."[3] From these passages it is quite apparent that

[1] Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, p. 80.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 19.

[3] Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 275.

the form and purpose of Kierkegaard's dialectic is entirely different from that of Hegel.

Regarding ethical stage, Kierkegaard's opinion is that whether a man likes it or not, every one will finally be compelled by his life-events to take responsibility, to be ethical. A question may be raised here: what about those people whose lives are mostly uneventful in the sense that they are not so much significant as can raise them to the status of confronting God. The great masses of people do not, as a matter of fact, find God confronting them as a spiritual presence, as did Kierkegaard.

To this question, most probably, Kierkegaard would have had to say that however insignificant man's life-events are, there is the chance of making their own decision, if, however, they do not very carefully avoid it. To Kierkegaard, there is a difference between people who reach for the truth in their inmost personality, and those who merely pass their days avoiding all the time making decisions and thereby taking responsibilities. They are so mass-minded that seldom find chance to make their individual decisions.

Only the former group of people exist in the true sense. About the latter group Kierkegaard says: they are "unhappy demoniacs, a legion," who "would have lost the inmost and holiest thing of all in a man, the unifying power of personality."[1] Kierkegaard admits that, "In every man there is something which to a certain degree prevents him from becoming perfectly transparent to himself,"[2] and he believes, to some

[1] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, p. 164.

[2] Loc. cit.

people "this may be the case in so high a degree, he may be so inexplicably woven into relationship of life which extend far beyond himself that he almost cannot reveal himself."[1] These are the people who live their whole lives aesthetically without exercising their freedom and power of choice.

No risk, no gain--is Kierkegaard's principle. A higher life can only be attained by risking absolutely everything. For him, choice is the act which engenders personality. It would seem likely for him that the choice to choose, as a principle of life, has a guiding value and reduces the chances of error. "Even if a man were to choose the wrong, he will nevertheless discover, precisely by reason of the energy with which he choose, that he had chosen the wrong."[2]

Objections to Sartre's ethics. A careful attention toward Sartre's philosophy exposes the fact that he has borrowed the main themes of his philosophy and ethics from Kierkegaard. It was Kierkegaard who first held up for Sartre the image of his alienated self, the terror of the modern world, the reality of freedom, and the meaning of despair. Kierkegaard has made Sartre aware of the fatality of human condition and he, then, by applying his imagination interprets it in a different way, namely, in an atheistic way. My purpose here is to explain, in a critical way, that Sartre by leading Kierkegaard's themes to atheistic direction is not successful to overcome their defects but rather more erroneous with their even more tragical consequences.

Sartre's universe is Kierkegaard's without God and one where man

[1] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, p. 164.

[2] Ibid., p. 171.

has assumed His prerogatives. It is here where the main defects of Sartre's ethics arise. The fact of God's non-existence would not make the human self free in its deepest sense, but rather the non-existence of a creative and conscious God would make man's place in the universe a relatively less important one.

Kierkegaard has described a man of Sartre's nature as a 'demoniacal'. "Some deny the eternal man. That very instant 'the wine of life is drawn' and every such individuality is demoniacal."[1] Sartre again, according to Kierkegaard's description, may be regarded as a 'defiant man' who wills to be himself apart from God. Sartre's ethical theory is utterly indeterminate because as it has no basis it must be invented from one moment to the next, and as it has no final goal it is impossible to specify what we should be moving toward. Thus in his theory, human existence becomes a bare striving to affirm what it cannot otherwise avoid. Sartre accuses Descartes of ascribing to the Divinity the absolute freedom which is in fact man's. But Sartre's statement might be inverted and thus we can say that Sartre has ascribed to man the attributes of the divine freedom--a freedom absolute and absurd.

Sartre's ethical theories are based on his assumption that God does not exist. But his assumption is dogmatic and so cannot give any strong support to his ethical theories. Due to the preoccupation with his own conception that 'for-itself' as a free-being is totally different from 'in-itself' as a self-identical being and these two cannot mix together, Sartre fails to take account of the sense in which a man can be

[1]Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 135.

self-identical and at the same time free.

If being and consciousness are not as completely antagonistic as Sartre takes them to be, the force of his argument against the existence of God is greatly reduced. Moreover, "If God's consciousness is supposed to be like ours in any univocal sense, then it is impossible to conceive of Him creating the world."[1] Sartre would at best be justified in saying that we cannot know whether God exists or not; but from his position he can, in no way, leap to the position that God does not exist, or that the existence of God is impossible.

In his lecture on 'Existentialism' Sartre, in order to show that existence precedes essence, that man creates his own essence and his own values, has compared God with the artisan and thus has said: "God makes man according to a procedure and a conception, exactly as the artisan manufactures a paper-knife, following a definition and a formula."[2] Sartre thus has conceived God to produce man in the way that suits best to prove his position and here he is as arbitrary as throughout his whole atheistic position.

We can find a profound contradiction in Sartre's moral theory if we compare the views put forward in Being and Nothingness with those of Existentialism and Humanism. In the chapter on 'Concrete Relations with Others' in Being and Nothingness, Sartre presents a phenomenology of hatred and concludes that in our relationship with 'the other', it is impossible to achieve mutual recognition of each other's freedom because the essence of this relation is not togetherness or mutuality but conflict

[1] D. E. Roberts, Existentialism and Religious Belief (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 215.

[2] Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, p. 27.

and hatred. In Existentialism and Humanism, on the other hand, he advances the contrary opinion when he says that we must attain the Kantian principle of treating other persons as end, that together with our freedom we must respect the freedom of others, and that a man cannot make his own freedom his aim unless he makes the freedom of others equally his aim.

Besides this contradiction, there is another consequence of Sartre's theory which makes it morally irrelevant. When Sartre says that I cannot make my own freedom my aim unless I make the freedom of others equally my aim, the regard for freedom of others becomes a necessary result of a regard for my own freedom and therefore an automatic and not a voluntarily sought consequence of this regard. As such it is morally irrelevant. The only moral duty, which Sartre's ethical assumptions permit, is a duty to oneself. But this does not serve Sartre's purpose at all.

For Sartre, there is no final limit to freedom, save the limit which freedom imposes upon itself. But when Sartre writes that even the individual who is subject to the executioner's tools is free, it would seem that the freedom of which he speaks is no more than a freedom to accept one's fate, which, to be sure, may be regarded as a form of freedom but can hardly be understood as absolute and total. It is a freedom which is limited by the facticity of existence and remains invariably partial and finite.

Moreover, Sartre's theory of absolute freedom is quite inconsistent with morality. Any choice, according to his theory, is as good as any other; there is no possibility of making a moral mistake. And this undercuts the very possibility of morality. Due to the serious confusion

involved in his doctrine of absolute freedom, Sartre himself finds it impossible consistently to maintain this doctrine.

If Sartre's view is true that the facts of the world are themselves made by us, by our choices then, this view is self-defeating. If he is right then his view of the world is just an expression of his arbitrary choice; and if someone chooses not to believe in his views, Sartre cannot say that he is wrong, because, according to his theory, any choice is as effective as any other.

Sartre is wrong in saying that man has created the values. In fact, man has chosen and not created them. If they were not in some sense there to be chosen they would not be values at all. For Kierkegaard, I can only choose what already is, for otherwise I should be creating rather than choosing. But, on the other hand, to accept the given as such is not choosing either. The real act of choice is and is not creation.[1] It is not creation if we consider the external aspect of choice. As such, it is always relative to some need or purpose. There is, however, a creation in true choice--the creation of free being which would not be if I did not choose.

When Sartre states that individual acts have a repercussion on all others, that a man is no longer an isolated individual, that he is involved in spite of himself in the collective life on which he depends and thus is responsible not only for himself but for all others, it seems that the very responsibility which was at the beginning the basis of Sartre's moral philosophy cease here to be a moral value. Because, here responsibility seems to mean something not freely chosen by the

[1] Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, p. 219.

individual but automatic, inevitable, imposed by the situation of the individual.

Though Sartre, like Kierkegaard, emphasizes on 'the individual', his ethics have some leaning towards social morality. M. Warnock maintains in her book on ethics[1] that most of the characters of Sartre's novels and plays have no individuality at all. Like a free human being they make decisions, certainly, but they make them as people of a certain class. They make decisions not as an individual human being but as 'a traitor', 'a fascist', 'a homosexual'. "Individual personality which, according to the theory, should be created every moment by free choices, seems to have been squeezed out, and an abstract freedom of choice has taken its place, which demands that the agent be regarded as an abstract entity as well."[2]

E. L. Allen, in his book on 'existentialism'[3] comments on Sartre's ethics that though it represents itself as an "assertion and vindication of freedom", it is itself not a work of a free mind. Rather in all his philosophical and ethical views Sartre is governed by dogmas; and the first of these dogmas is the non-existence of God. In all of Sartre's ethical arguments, God's non-existence has been taken for granted.[4]

Comparative evaluations. The relation of Kierkegaard to Sartre is very problematical. However, from this whole study it is quite apparent that Sartre has used Kierkegaard's works in the process of his own

[1] M. Warnock, Ethics Since 1900 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960)

[2] Ibid., p. 167.

[3] E. L. Allen, Existentialism From Within (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953).

[4] Ibid., p. 91.

analysis of philosophical and ethical views. But in doing this he is very conscious that he is doing something quite different than what Kierkegaard did. Thus although we find him influenced in various ways by Kierkegaard, he takes from him only what he can apply to his own atheistic position, and the rest--the faith in objective uncertainty, the leap into faith--he rejects.

But nevertheless Kierkegaard is his guide through the underworld of nothingness. Sartre realized dehumanization and the degradation of individual personality at the age of real crisis. But Kierkegaard was aware of depersonalization and collectivism and of spiritual disintegration going on under the surface of western civilization at a time when nineteenth-century belief in progress and in the goodness of human nature was in its full swing.

Nowell-Smith has made a very good suggestion about what should be the connotation of the word 'moral'; and his suggestion corresponds to a great extent to Kierkegaard's view of morality to which Sartre also has agreed afterwards. The question 'what shall I do?' must be answered by each man for himself and that at least is part of the connotation of the word 'moral'.[1] The moral worth of a person, as both Kierkegaard and Sartre find, does not depend on the rightness or value of the end at which he aims, much less on the actual effects of his actions. It depends on his determination, on his choice to do the best he can according to his lights.

Like the universe, man has not been created without purpose and has not to pass his life aimlessly. His life has a purpose, and he is

[1] P. H. Nowell-Smith, Ethics (London: Penguin Books, 1954), p. 320.

responsible and accountable in respect of it. In the phraseology of the Quran, man should become God's image. And Kierkegaard realized this. He realized man's need for God. Man's insistent spiritual need is a living faith in God.

Kierkegaard realized that ethical living is a process which the limits of a predetermined code cannot accomplish. He conceived it his mission to bring people to realize their potentials, to be 'authentic' men they had a duty to become. Kierkegaard's 'existential imperative' is a Kantian imperative rendering of the purely humanist end of the actualization of human potential. It is spiritually conceived and reconstructed in individualistic terms.

The ethic which Kierkegaard creates puts the individual over the crowd, by emphasizing the free-thought and never-ending creativity of the human individuals. He leaves it to us to find out in our own way our own ethical basis. He expects us, without the necessity of a binding ethical or religious doctrine, to affirm the worth of everything by our inner appropriateness, by our sincerity and inwardness.

The most important aspect of Kierkegaard's works is 'the individual' as a fundamental category of existence. He is a careful observer of human experience who by the use of the psychological method of introspection has probed into the depths of man's being. Throughout his works, he emphasizes the importance of self-knowledge and self-realization.

On the basis of this method Sartre later on goes still further into existential psycho-analysis. But the result of his study is pessimistic. He finds man as a solitary being who knows that there is no justification of his life but still there is no way out. The feelings

of dread which arise out in Sartrean man in this situation gradually express a generalized fear toward the whole human condition.

At this point it is important to remember that Kierkegaard's individual does not seem to be vanquished by pessimism. His despair has an ultimate optimism for in the end the individual may be saved from his debasement by the grace of religious experience. Man stands between the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal, the being and nothingness. And faith is the leap over to the positive state of existing.

But Kierkegaard "denies that the limitations of reason can be overcome by combining it with 'faith' or 'aesthetic intuition'."[1] Nothing can be known with certainty. Only "fools and young men prate about everything being possible for a man. That however," in Kierkegaard's opinion, "is a great error. Spiritually speaking, everything is possible, but in the world of the finite there is much which is not possible."[2]

Kierkegaard was the first among the modern thinkers to conclude that there was no rational justification whatever for basic moral judgments. There is always something 'absurd' or 'paradoxical' in every situation calling for a genuine moral choice. This paradox is that element in ethics which defies any rational analysis of a moral problem. In every society, in every religion, there come times when everything seems so well-ordered for the individual that he himself disappears, ceases to have importance and responsibility. And in such cases there

[1]Price, Narrow Pass, p. 113.

[2]Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, Anchor Books, p. 54.

will always be a response to Kierkegaard's appeal to personality.

Sartre begins at the same point as did Kierkegaard, namely, the human condition; but his philosophy never really succeeds in overcoming man's basic moral dilemma. His atheistic existentialism can give no reason for my being as other than I am. And one may find it ultimately absurd that one exists or that anything exists. A never-ending bitter dread is the result of Sartre's philosophy which does not know like Kierkegaardian ideas the means of overcoming this dread by seeking to regain himself in the Absolute. Kierkegaard is concerned with the self and its relation to God, whereas in Sartre we find 'nothingness' at the other end of the self.

Sartre agrees with Kierkegaard in holding the view that a psychological tendency to discover meaning in our environment does not justify us in adopting any predetermined system of values. But this rejection of metaphysics is not based on a restriction of knowledge to verifiable experience, as we find in Sartre's theory, but rather it is based upon Kierkegaardian insistence that the transition from psychology to dogma is always an act of faith and never one of logical necessity. In fact, this is the reason why Kierkegaard's philosophy presents no obstacle to Sartre who wants to copy his existential philosophy but not his beliefs. Sartre adopts not his positive apologetic for Christianity, but his negative assessment of metaphysics.

But, however, Sartre's adoption of Kierkegaardian ideas is a creative rather than an imitative process. His ethic, though not like Kierkegaardian an ethic of self-perfection, is an ethic of self-reliance. In his autobiography, The Word, Sartre has accused his grandparents whose indifferent attitude toward religion, he thinks, has gradually led him to atheism. But in accusing thus, I think, Sartre has committed

'bad-faith', has tried to avoid the responsibility of his atheism.

Sartre's assertion of God's non-existence is, what can be called, his own individual choice. It is his own personal decision, without any reason and without any proof, and for this decision he should be ready to take the responsibility.

Sartre, however, has the courage to follow the consequences of his atheism to its bitter end, and there lies his importance. By insisting on his atheism, Sartre, inadvertently, offers us the chance to appropriate the passionate inwardness of our belief in God, without simply believing in an objective way. By placing the choice in its most acute form, he leaves for us the scope of making the decision in earnestness and not of simple choice.

If Sartre's view is true that God does not exist then all values become completely disintegrated and this ultimately leads to man's own destruction. If, on the other hand, Kierkegaard is true then we have to believe that " . . . for God all things are possible. To believe in his own destruction is impossible."[1] In such case, it is better to choose to believe in God because, even if we are deceived in our belief we lose nothing of any real value, since the alternative of this is Sartrean atheism where all values lose cohesion totally.

[1]Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, Anchor Books, p. 172.

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